

Visitors to Wudang, if they are lucky, will see masters practicing kung fu on the roofs of the halls.

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"Architecture has become such an important art form that it deserves the attention of museums..."

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Yang insisted on inviting local farmers to join her troupe, because "they are the ones who dance for love and life."

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By Yi Yi

A widely-forwarded email message titled "Don't take it for granted that foreigners don't understand Chinese," describes 17 embarrassing moments collected by the author illustrating the fact that many foreigners can speak fluent Chinese nowadays. One goes like this - A Chinese couple were strolling in New York's Central Park when a very heavily-built American man passed by. One of them exclaimed, in Chinese, "Look at him, how can anyone become so over-weight!" The man turned back and retorted, in perfect Chinese, "I was born like this, what can I do?"

Although the message is meant as a joke, it is very close to reality. Learning Chinese is more popular now worldwide than it has ever been, and a program unveiled last Thursday is likely to add fuel to the flames.

The Ministry of Education held a press conference Thursday on the implementation of the International Volunteer Chinese Teachers Project. Sponsored by the China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (NOTCFL), the project is a key component of the Chinese Bridge Program, an international university students' Chinese proficiency competition launched in 2002.

Volunteer Teachers Project

At a press conference during the recent National People's Congress, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said that Chinese has become the third most used language in the United States. His comment was supported by figures released by the US Census Bureau last October: after English (215.4 million) and Spanish (28.1 million), Chinese (2 million) was the language most commonly spoken at home by US residents.

The rest of the world is also taking Chinese very seriously, and learning the language is becoming more and more common. There are currently over 100 million people using or learning Chinese outside China, and over 100 countries offer Chinese classes in various educational institutions. The rapid development of Chinese teaching in other countries and the drastic increase of students has led to a severe shortage internationally of Chinese teachers. Many countries, such as Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Egypt, South Africa as well as the developed European and American countries, are asking China to provide teachers of Chinese to fill the shortfall.

The International Chinese Teachers Volunteer Project, which dispatches volunteer teachers abroad, was established to meet this demand.

Speaking about why the volunteer project was established, Cao Guoxing, director of the international cooperation and exchange department of the Ministry of Education, started with some statistics.

- There are only around 3,000 teachers of Chinese as a foreign language who have actually obtained the qualification certificate.

- Full time teachers number 2,500 nationwide, part-time 3,500, a total of 6,000 altogether.

- The total number of overseas students in China is 86,000, among which 60,000 are here to learn Chinese.

- The proportion of teachers to students is one to ten.

Meanwhile, Mauritius, for example, has asked China to send 50 Chinese teachers next January, while over 5,000 schools

Chatting in Chinese

Volunteer teaching project fuels popularity of studying putonghua



There are currently over 100 million people using or learning Chinese outside China, and over 100 countries offer Chinese classes in various educational institutions.

Photo by Photocome

HSK

The Chinese Proficiency Test, or Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK), is the national standardized test designed and developed by the HSK Center of Beijing Language and Culture University to evaluate the Chinese proficiency of non-native Chinese speakers (including foreigners, overseas Chinese and people from Chinese

national minorities). HSK is divided into three categories: beginning level (HSK Basic), elementary to intermediate level (HSK Elementary-Intermediate), and advanced level (HSK Advanced). HSK is held regularly in China and in other countries each year and HSK certificates are issued to those who meet required scores.

and institutions in Indonesia plan to open Chinese classes. "There is no way that we can meet such a huge demand if we rely solely on the government, therefore establishing a long-term volunteer project became a must," said Cao.

NOTCFL started experimenting with dispatching volunteer Chinese teachers last year. In response to requests from the Philippines and Thailand, 42 volunteers from Fujian Normal University and Yunnan Normal University were sent to those two countries. After ten months on the job, those first envoys returned to China this month.

Qualifications

The basic qualifications for the volunteers are clearly stated in the Regulations on Implementing the International Chinese Teacher Volunteer Project. First, they must be Chinese citizens, healthy, and under the age of 65; Second, they should be devoted to teaching Chinese as a foreign language and be enthusiastic regarding volunteer work;

Third, they should be of good character, with no criminal record; Fourth, they should have majored and hold a diploma or degree in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, Chinese, history, philosophy, education methodology, a foreign language, political science, psychology, law or social science, or be a retired university, middle school or primary school teacher with a relevant diploma or degree; Fifth, they must speak putonghua (mandarin).

Moreover, applicants should acquire a certain knowledge of a foreign language, not necessarily that of the destination country. The term of employment ranges from six months to two years, and the standard monthly allowance per person is \$400 dollars.

Anyone interested in teaching abroad as a volunteer should register on NOTCFL's website: www.hanban.edu.cn.

NOTCFL has established the International Chinese Teachers Volunteer Center to handle recruitment, dispatch, budgets, contracts with target countries as well as

a two-week training course before the volunteers are sent off to the destination countries.

Yan Meihua, director of NOTCFL, told press last Thursday that demand for Chinese teachers is enormous. Malaysia currently needs 90,000 Chinese teachers, and Indonesia 100,000. However, "the number of teachers dispatched depends on the bilateral negotiation between China and the relevant country, also on the government's financial support. Therefore donations to the project are warmly welcomed," he said.

Currently, China has signed contracts with countries including Mauritius, the Philippines, Indonesia and Mexico. Last year, 19 teachers were sent to the Philippines, and a contract to provide a further 300 teachers has been signed. "We need to gradually accumulate experience and slowly develop the project in order to make a positive impact worldwide," said Zhang.

Public enthusiasm

Following media coverage of the press conference last Thursday, NOTCFL's phones ran hot, and the office saw a steady stream of visitors, asking questions such as "Can I be dispatched next month?" or "My daughter is in the United States, can I be sent there?"

While the office welcomes the enthusiasm with which the project has been met, there seem to be a few misunderstandings. Five days after the press conference, NOTCFL issued another announcement addressing the most frequently asked questions.

First of all, online registration is the only way to apply. The vol-

unteer center will select qualified applicants for the first round and save them in its database. These applicants will receive an interview notice within two years. There will be no immediate overseas postings. Currently the destination countries are mainly neighboring developing countries, where Chinese teachers are in great demand.

Vice minister of education Zhang Xincheng noted that the significance of the volunteer teacher project is far-reaching. Not only will it help promote the use of Chinese and Chinese culture and philosophy, it will also ease the great demand for Chinese teachers, help raise the standard of overseas teaching, while at the same time widen the range of employment opportunities for university graduates. "University graduates with BA degrees will be a key resource of the project," he said.

Why learn Chinese?

While the soaring interest in studying Chinese is no doubt primarily due to the country's surging economy, cultural depth might be listed as the second key motive. Associate professor Lisa Norton from the Department of Sculpture of the Art Institute of Chicago, is one of the enthusiastic students of Chinese.

Explaining her reason for starting Chinese lessons one and a half years ago, Norton says it was because she wanted to come to China to work, "since my field, sculpture, is public art, and I think China for the most is the best place to do my work." It was quite an experience when after eight months of studying Chinese, Norton finally set foot in China, not in Beijing, but in Xiamen, Fujian Province. Upon her arrival, she found the standard Chinese putonghua she had studied for the past eight months was of little practical use in Xiamen, where Xiamen dialect is used, of which she could not understand a single word.

Now based in the capital, Norton takes four classes per week as well as meeting once a week with a private tutor. She said, "whether I speak fluent Chinese or not doesn't have a significant impact on my career success, but it would be a great personal enjoyment if one day I can communicate freely with my Chinese co-workers. She may take the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) in the future, not for the certificate, but to see how far she has progressed.

On Beijing Language and Culture University's HSK website, there is a survey on why people choose to take the test. Of the 2,272 respondents by Wednesday, 1,016 gave employment as their main reason, 811 wanted to know their Chinese level, 288 were seeking entrance to universities in China and 142 needed to communicate in Chinese for business.

In the early 1990s, the main reason given by most people taking the HSK test was to study in Chinese universities.

With China entering the WTO and winning the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games, the number of people registering to take the HSK exam worldwide surged to a record high of 144,000 in 2002.

By the end of 2002, 540,000 people from more than 120 countries had taken the HSK exam. There are 44 test locations in 27 Chinese cities including Hong Kong and Macao, that hold the test twice a year. Overseas test locations numbered 76 in 2003, spreading over Asia, Australasia, Europe and the Americas.

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Free Personal Classifieds

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printed free of charge. Email your personal classifieds (in English and Chinese) to bjtoday@ynet.com. Personal classifieds should conform to relevant laws and regulations.

Olympic Economy Cake Divided

By Zhang Bo

The two-day Market Promotion Conference on Olympic Economy ended Monday with a signing ceremony of ten key projects that total an investment of 21.5 billion yuan.

The ten projects include: the No. 4 line subway, the Nortel Networks Research Center and five franchise projects including sewage and waste treatment plants.

Eight of the ten projects are infrastructure related, representing the first projects on which the Beijing government has broken the monopoly and resorted to ten-

dering to introduce franchise investment of social capital.

As a result of the conference, the No. 4 line subway will be constructed under cooperation between enterprise and government. The project construction will take five years, starting this year and finishing by the end of 2007. The aggregate investment amounts to 16 billion yuan.

Currently, Beijing Infrastructure Investment Company, Hong Kong MTR Corporation, and Beijing Capital Group have signed a letter of intent on their cooperation on the joint construction and operation of the No. 4 line subway.

Another three subway line projects have also aroused investor interest. Xie Jianhua, an official from the commission, revealed that up to now, enterprises including CITIC Group, Beijing Capital Group, Japan Sumitomo Corporation, Singapore MRT and many European enterprises have expressed their intention to participate in the tender.

Another focus of investors at the conference is five planned sewage treatment plants, which will take the form of Build-Operate-Transfer, and the project investors will be selected through an open process.

According to Beijing Municipal Administration Commission, investors selected

through public bidding will be granted franchise by the government, and Beijing is striving to gradually establish a new operation system for sewage treatment, which will be in line with the market economy and feature a multi-ownership structure.

Apart from the above, other projects promoted at the conference are under further negotiation. Accordingly, with an aggregate investment of 135 billion yuan, the altogether 387 projects promoted have attracted over 2,000 enterprises, including some trans-national enterprises, such as General Electric, Volkswagen, Boeing, Sony and Siemens.

Shenzhen Vetoes Statute Draft for Fourth Time

By Hou Mingxin

The 31st Session of the Third of Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Shenzhen Municipality last Friday vetoed a statute draft on the audit and censorship of government-invested projects in Shenzhen. This is the fourth time that the city's congress has vetoed the draft and the first time in the city's history that a statute draft has been vetoed four straight times.

The focus of the draft is whether the final accounting of revenue and expenditure should be operated before the completion of a governmental-invested project.

Some congress members said the purpose of the statute draft is to prevent unreasonable expenditure and unseen loss during the project, the final accounting can be seen as a standard and it should be done in advance. Other congress members said that the operation of final accounting before the completion of the project could contravene the contract law and result in government departments breaching contracts.

Since only 18 of 37 members endorsed the draft, it automatically faced veto.

The congress said that the draft would be formally voted at the congress's next session after collecting suggestions from law professionals and making some changes.

Tian Siyuan, a law professor from Qinghua University, told *Beijing Today* Tuesday that the veto of the draft was an excellent example of legislation democracy in China.

"Democracy means the open exchange of different views. The veto of the draft doesn't mean it is wrong or unreasonable, but the principle of democracy is the few obeys the majority," Tian said.

Bank of China Scraps Official Titles

By Su Wei

The Bank of China (BOC) is to scrap the titles "juzhang" (director general), "chuzhang" (section chief) and "zhuren" (director) from the second half of this year, bank president Xiao Gang announced last Friday at a meeting of the Institute of International Finance in Shanghai.

Making a clear distinction between job titles and official titles will help the bank to establish a sound corporate governance system, said Xiao.

"The bank will employ titles such as 'department manager,' 'senior manager' and 'assistant manager,'" BOC spokesman Wang Zhaowen was quoted as saying by Xinhua.

Wang also said that public recruitment of managers for the bank's Gansu, Hainan and Russia branches and vice general manager of the bank's human resources department are underway, and that "recruitment of management staff at this level is all to be undertaken publicly."

Since being nominated along with the China Construction Bank by the State Council for pilot reform as joint-stock banks, BOC has been undergoing various reforms, especially its personnel system, said Xiao.

According to Wang there are over 100 directors general, over 500 deputy-directors general and over 1,000 section chiefs in the bank.

Zhou Xiaochuan, president of the People's Bank of China commented at the meeting that the openness and competitiveness of Chinese banks should be strengthened, and "reforms conducted more boldly".

The oldest bank in China, BOC is the most internationalized state-owned commercial bank in China. Its profits exceed those of all other domestic banks and it has been included on the Fortune Global 500 list for 14 consecutive years.



Photo by Photocom

Courtyards Go on Sale

By Chu Meng

A new policy which enables enterprises as well as individuals from both home and abroad to buy 650-plus *siheyuan*, or courtyard houses in Beijing, indicating a new model for the protection of China's traditional architecture, was issued by Beijing Municipal Territorial Resource and Housing Administrative Bureau on Monday.

According to the new policy, over 650 traditional siheyuan listed as important historical and cultural sites under state protection can be purchased by any enterprises, social organizations, government bodies and individuals throughout the country (including Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan), as

well as foreign companies, organizations and individuals.

To stimulate sales of these siheyuan, the government has also issued a series of preferential terms: Buyers and sellers can decide the final payment through agreement; purchasers can apply for land certificates after paying off the land costs within three years; the government will halve the land tax payable by purchasers, as well as reduce administrative charges for necessary protection and maintenance.

Siheyuan are a typical form of ancient Chinese housing architecture, based on four rooms arranged around a central courtyard. Not only residences, but also ancient palaces, government

offices, temples and monasteries were built according to the siheyuan pattern. Such residences offered space, comfort and quiet privacy.

Many of Beijing's siheyuan have been torn down in recent years to make way for new construction projects, and a large percentage of the population who once lived in courtyard houses have moved into high-rise apartment blocks in new residential areas.

In December 2003, the Beijing Cultural Relics Bureau issued an announcement saying that a total of 658 siheyuan, tagged with identifying blue plates over the entrance, could not be demolished to make way for new real estate development projects.

Threshold Lowered for Foreign-funded Commercial Enterprises

By Hou Mingxin

The Ministry of Commerce issued a new regulation on foreign-invested commercial companies last Friday. In line with China's WTO entry promises, the regulation will reduce restrictions on those enterprises.

The regulation will take effect June 1, replacing an experimental rule on commercial enterprises with foreign investment implemented in 1999.

Compared with the experimental rule, the new regulation has two major changes. One is that the concept "trial" has been abandoned, and the other is that restrictions on the number, stock holdings and business scope of these enterprises have been reduced.

The new regulation makes it clear that China will lower its restrictive conditions for foreign-funded commercial enterprises according to its WTO commitments. With the new regulation, it becomes easier for enterprises to enter the market. Examining and approving procedures are also simplified.

According to the new regulation, after December 11, foreign-invested commercial enterprises engaged in wholesale will be allowed to operate business relating to medicine

and agricultural chemicals and plastic films. Besides these products, commercial enterprises with foreign investment engaged in retail will be also allowed to do business related to refined oil.

After February 11, 2006, foreign-invested commercial enterprises engaged in wholesale will be allowed to operate business related to chemical fertilizer, refined oil and raw oil. And after December 11, those enterprises in the area of retail will be allowed to do business related to chemical fertilizer, the regulation says.

According to the new regulation, commercial enterprises completely foreign invested will be permitted to be set up from December 11 this year. The regulation still does not permit these enterprises to engage in tobacco-related business.

Statistics from the ministry shows that China's commercial field has used foreign funds totaling more than three billion US dollars since it established a trial for commercial enterprises with foreign investment.

Since the commercial area opened to foreign investment, more than 270 foreign-invested commercial enterprises and more than 2,200 branches have been set up in China.

Steady Growth Forecast for Housing Prices

By Chu Meng

Beijing's commercial housing price will experience steady growth in the foreseeable future, according to the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics

Zheng Xin, a statistician at the bureau's investment department, told *Beijing Today* Tuesday that with more and more transnational enterprises emerging in Beijing, the booming of the Olympic economy and continued GDP growth, Beijing's commercial housing market will stay as hot as ever, because of the city's limited land resources.

"In general, Beijing's commercial housing price will maintain a high level for quite a long time, and it will keep rising," said Zheng Xin.

In the past six years, Beijing's housing price has consistently doubled the country's average level. In 2003, the Beijing average was 4,737 yuan per square meter, compared to 2,359 yuan nationwide.

While statistics from the bureau actually show a decline in the first quarter of 2004, with prices for Beijing commercial housing falling 235 yuan per square meter on the corresponding period in 2003, Zheng says the significant increase in sales of suburban housing and economical housing pulled down the average level.

He added, "The short-term results cannot tell us much. Because Beijing's housing price is a comprehensive outcome of many factors, such as its geographic characteristics, GDP growth, the increasing foreign population and the Olympic, it will keep growing for a long time. But it won't grow very fast."

Beijing Reports One SARS Suspect Case

China's Health Ministry spokesman said Thursday that one suspect severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) case was reported in Beijing.

The female patient, 20, surnamed Li, was a nurse with the Beijing Jiangong Hospital, the ministry said. Li began to show such symptoms as cold, fever and cough on April 5 and was admitted into the Beijing Jiangong Hospital on April 7. Seven days later, she was transferred to the People's Hospital affiliated to the Beijing University, according to the ministry.

The Beijing municipal government has activated the SARS warning mechanism, started to disinfect her residence and monitor the 171 people that had close contact with her. The Ministry of Health demanded the health departments at all levels to strengthen the monitoring of any possible outbreak of the epidemic.

The ministry has informed the World Health Organization and the Hong Kong, Macao special administrative regions about the case.

(Xinhua)

Deposit Insurance Established by Central Bank

By Sun Yongjian

The People's Bank of China has established a Deposit Insurance Department to prepare for the setting up of a national deposit insurance system. Wei Jianing, a vice director of the Development Research Center under the State Council, told *Beijing Today* of the move last Saturday at a financial forum.

The deposit insurance system will protect the profits of depositors and help maintain financial stability should a bank suffer a failure and debt payments are needed. The insurance fees will be supplied by relevant financial organizations and will be paid out to an organization when it faces crisis or bankruptcy.

When the Hainan Development Bank was closed in June 1998, the government allocated 3.4 billion yuan to alleviate the crisis. Last year, Lin Qian, the chairman of the board of Xunda City Credit Cooperative in Zhejiang Province embezzled 60 million yuan, which led to a run on the bank. The central bank then had to move to prop up the bank.

Censorship Panel Established for Imported Computer Games

By Chu Meng

China has established a first committee for censoring imported computer games, indicating that all imported computer games will face rigid inspection before their entry into market from now on. Zhang Xinjian, deputy director of the Cultural Market Department of the Ministry of the Culture, made the announcement at a press conference last Thursday.

The committee consists of 20 inspectors, who are charged with examining such things as violent or pornographic plots used in imported computer games.

"It is predicted that the computer games industry will show an annual growth rate of 115 percent in the next few years. Therefore, a rigid and reasonable market entrance standard is essential for establishing a healthy computer games environment," said Zhang.

Free Trade Boosted in Shanghai's Waigaoqiao

By Su Wei

The official opening of the Shanghai Waigaoqiao Logistics Bonded Zone last Thursday afternoon is being hailed in the media as a key step for it to become an international-standard free trade zone.

The zone combines the functions of Shanghai Port and Waigaoqiao Free Trade Zone (WFTZ), with a focus on developing industries, including logistics and storage.

International transfer, delivery, purchasing, and intermediary trade are the main functions in the logistics bonded zone, said Zhang Yaolun, director of the WFTZ management committee.

Three Stock Market “Swordsmen” Tumble

By Sun Yongjian

After years of strong performance in the depressed domestic stock market, earning them a common nickname of “The Three Stock Market Swordsmen,” this year has proved rocky for Xinjiang Tunhe, Xianghuoju and Alloy Investment, three listed companies owned by Xinjiang-based D’Long Group. While the market has been showing signs of an upturn, all three shares have plummeted since January and posted maximum 10 percent drops every day since last Thursday.

D’Long Group, which has roots in mining and production of such items as tomatoes, cement and seed, entered the financial sector around a decade ago.

Reasons for the losses are not clear. Some analysts have attributed them to poor money management, while company leaders blame the media for inaccurately portraying its financial status.

On April 16, Xinjiang Tunhe transferred ownership of its subsidiary ST Zhongyan to Hangzhou Baqun Group for 80 million yuan to secure some badly needed capital.

Before the plunges began, no company under the D’Long Group umbrella had posted a 10 percent daily loss for six years. Yet, from January 6 to April 16, Xianghuoju shares plummeted from 15.89 yuan to 7.56 yuan. Xinjiang Tunhe’s share value fell 50 percent from February 2 to April 16, during which time the price of Alloy Investment stock also dropped 40 percent.

By April 16, the total market value of the three companies shrunk 9.3 billion yuan.

Starting in 1994, D’Long established a long fund chain involving complicated



Are D’Long’s troubles caused by mismanagement or media mania? Photo by Photocome

equity relations with many financial organizations, but that chain was broken in March.

Tang Wanli, president of the board of directors of D’Long, blames the firm’s woes on rampant media speculation about the group’s financial health sparked by a report in a local magazine. In a statement published on the group’s website, he said the media “chain reaction” had cut off cash flow between D’Long’s businesses and assured the public that its industrial operations were still performing soundly.

Bank of China IPO On Track

By Zhao Hongyi

The Bank of China is preparing to assemble all its assets together for its upcoming public listing instead of parting off its high-quality assets for separate sales, according to a statement made by bank spokesman Wang Zhaowen at a press briefing last Friday.

“China Life’s experience has shown that splitting assets is not a method understood by overseas investors,” Wang said, “Though Chinese companies are used to showing only their best sides abroad.”

After China Life listed in the New York last December, US investors discovered that its parent company had 5.4 billion yuan of unexplained loans not reported in the IPO. Those investors filed suit against China Life in March on charges of fraud.

The Bank of China and China Construction Bank, long saddled with high bad assets ratios, were the recipients of a \$45 billion cash injection from the country’s central bank in January in order to help them prepare for their IPOs. Wang admitted, however, that the Bank of China’s bad assets ratio still stood at 14.84 percent.

The spokesman indicated the bank was also preparing to cut its workforce by 70,000 employees in order to streamline its core businesses and workflow. “We will finish our internal adjustments by the end of the year,” Wang said.

Wang would not specify where the group was going to list but did say that Bank of China (Hong Kong), which has been listed on the Hong Kong stock market for years, would be included in the IPO.

Utah Seeks Olympic Involvement

By Zhao Hongyi

The 2008 Olympic Games Organizing Committee opened 1.3 trillion yuan of Olympic-related projects to domestic and overseas investment in a grand ceremony held in Beijing last Thursday. Among the parties hoping to get a slice of that pie is the US state of Utah, which dispatched a business delegation to the capital on Monday.

The delegation, consisting of representative of 15 companies headquartered in the state, visited Beijing this week and heads to Shanghai next week. On Wednesday, *Beijing Today* interviewed Jeff Gochnour, head of the delegation and director of the Utah Division of Business and Economic Development.

Beijing Today: What are the purposes of your visit to China?

Jeff Gochnour: Fundamentally, we are trying to promote China-Utah business relations.

Specifically, we are using the experiences related to Olympic Games organization to seek business opportunities here. Salt Lake City, the capital of Utah, successfully organized the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. A number of the companies in our delegation are experts in planning and organizing such events.

Another purpose, as we have been doing for years, is to invite Chinese investors to do business with Utah.

BT: What kind of experiences did you glean from the Games?

JG: Infrastructure is very important. It was after the Winter Games that we made our state into a new business center. We are now promoting post-Olympic business opportunities for Utah companies worldwide.

The Games also promoted the quality of living in our state.

BT: What are the major items Utah exports to China?

JG: Computers and electronics, food, chemicals, transportation facilities, machines and fabricated goods.

BT: What is the picture of Chinese companies investing in Utah?

JG: Utah is a newcomer in attracting Chinese investors. A trade company from Nanjing established a representative office in Salt Lake City two weeks ago.

Last June, we invited China-Harvard Leadership Training Program students, most from senior posts in the Chinese government, to visit our state. We want to keep that visiting program going.

B&Q Sets Off Local Price War

By Zhao Hongyi

The warehouse prices on some goods at the local branch of British construction materials retailer B&Q have sparked a full-fledged price war in the Beijing market this month.

The focus of the heated competition is high-end, often imported, products. The prices of certain lines of tiles, such as “Champion” and “New Nanyue” have been slashed up to 55 percent, “Toto” toilet prices are selling for one-third less than just weeks ago and the cost of Giessdorf brand kitchen and bathroom items have dropped by over half across the city.

Li Linwei, manager of the Red Star Macalline Furniture and Home Decoration Plaza, another local home decoration retailer, blamed the price war on B&Q, which has cut its own prices by a sweeping 15 to 75 percent since opening its Beijing branch last October.

David Wei, president of B&Q China, defended his company, saying, “we have the capability, both in product supply and financial support, to provide customers with the best products and prices,” *Beijing Youth Daily* reported on Sunday.

The price war represents not only a battle for market, according to Wen Dong, general manager of B&Q North China, but head-to-head combat between traditional free markets and sophisticated chain stores.

“The local construction materials market consists of a number of free markets. The owners of the markets invite retailers

to sell products under one roof and live on rent payments for the stalls,” Wei explained at the “2004 B&Q China Summit” on March 30 in Beijing.

He criticized the free market schemes for not insuring the reliability and competitiveness of products sold, adding, “Only chain stores like B&Q’s can do so by reducing costs through mass purchasing and careful internal management.”

The chain has opened 16 outlets in China since entering the domestic market through Shanghai in 1999 and will open another two stores in Beijing this year. Its publicly-announced plans call for the establishment of 80 domestic outlets by 2008.

French chain Leroy Merlin is set to open its first store in Beijing later this year and Germany’s OBI is preparing its fourth outlet in the city, according to *Beijing Youth Daily*.

Local rivals, however, are confident they have what it takes to resist the aggressive invaders. Wang Linming, general manager of the free market EasyHome, said local wholesalers and retailers could provide lower prices and better products. “Foreign companies can only act as models here,” he added, indicating that Chinese rivals would be able to learn from and surpass overseas competitors.

A few domestic chains have been established, such as Shanghai-based HomeMart, Jiangsu-based Red Star Macalline, and Beijing-based EasyHome and OrientalHome. Most of them have shown profits.



B&Q has cut its prices 15 to 75 percent since entering the Beijing market last fall. Photo by Photocome

Subway Line Investment Coming from Three Sources

By Sun Yongjian

Construction of the No. 4 line of the Beijing subway, considered a major Olympic project, will begin this year with 16 billion yuan in investment. The line should be operational in 2007, according to information released at Monday’s Market Promotion Conference on the Beijing Olympic Economy.

The construction funds will come from three investors, Hong Kong-based

HK Subway Cooperation and local enterprises Beijing Infrastructure Investment Co. and Capital Group.

The 26-kilometer No. 4 subway line will run from Majiapu in Fengtai district to Beigongmen at the Summer Palace in Haidian District, stopping at 22 stations.

“I am very confident about the economic opportunities provided by the Beijing Olympic Games,” Qi Hui, chief inspector for HK Subway told *Beijing*

Today at the conference. Qi added that his company would be investing 2.4 billion yuan in the project.

Liu Xiaoguang, president of Capital Group stressed that the subway presented a rare opportunity for the company to cooperate with an overseas investor in the construction of an Olympic project, which he hoped would help the company in its drive to improve competitiveness and list abroad.

Ningxia Fraud Case Finally Gets Day in Court

By Sun Yongjian

After three years of waiting, the plaintiffs in a high-profile lawsuit against Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region-based Yinguangxia Industry and Commercial Shareholding Co. were happy to hear that their case had finally been accepted by the Yinchuan Intermediate People’s Court on Tuesday.

On April 23, 2002, the China Securities Regulatory Committee announced it was imposing financial punishment on Yinguangxia for providing false financial information to investors. The committee also

announced that investors who lost money before the company went bankrupt in 2001 could file civil lawsuits to claim compensation within the following two years.

Mrs. Wang, one of the 80,000 investors swindled by the company’s fraudulent claims, told *Beijing Today* that she had lost more than 10 million yuan in one year and was anxious to finally get her day in court. Other investors lost up to 20 million yuan.

Yan Yiming, a lawyer representing 1,000 investors in the suit, likened the legal process to climbing a mountain.

“We filed an initial lawsuit, but due to the company’s continued hemorrhaging of money, even if the investors win the case, they’re not likely to get any compensation. The company has already paid 70 million yuan to its creditors, so I am not sure how much will be left for individual investors,” he said.

Those poor prospects for investors receiving meaningful compensation were echoed by Zheng Yi, a market researcher for Huaxia Securities who said that the company was in no real position to pay them back, regardless of the court’s judgment.

Police Bust Insurance Fraud Ring

By Sun Yongjian

Vehicle insurance, a relatively new product in the local insurance market, has become the subject of widespread fraud, with customers faking accidents and then filing claims for damages, the Beijing Bureau of the China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC) announced last Friday.

“Beijing police have uncovered a professional gang committing insurance fraud and arrested 21 people involved. They subsequently confessed to over 200 cases, defrauding eight insurers including PICC and PingAn for a total of 3 million yuan,” said Fu Anping, vice president of the local CIRC branch.

He added that fraudulent claims accounted for 20 to 30 percent of the total 2.3 billion yuan in compensation paid out to owners of vehicle insurance policies last year in Beijing. The relative ease of such crimes has given rise to criminals pursuing insurance fraud as a full-time occupation.

Duck Roaster Looks to List

By Sun Yongjian

Famed Beijing duck restaurant chain Beijing Quanjude Co. intends to get listed on the domestic stock market, Liu Yi, vice president of Capital Tourism Group revealed at a press conference on Monday.

Capital Tourism Group is a new tourism conglomerate formed by the merger of Quanjude and two other local companies. Of the three, Quanjude is the best prepared for listing and therefore will go first, Liu added.

He said the listing was just one in a series of steps Capital Tourism Group plans to take, including courting domestic and foreign partners and accelerating shareholding reform, in order to become a full-fledged, international giant in the tourism industry within a decade.

New Player Entering Mobile Phone Arena

By Sun Yongjian

Amoisonic Electronics, a huge Fujian Province-based maker of VCD players and other home electronic products, announced on Monday that it was investing 175 million yuan to get into the mobile phone manufacturing field.

On April 15, Amoisonic signed a contract with Nanking Mobile Group to establish Nanking Junda Mobile Body Co., with a registered capital of 350 million yuan. Shares of the new company will be evenly split between both sides.

According to sources from inside Amoisonic, the new joint venture will begin operating in late May or early June.

Fuel Futures Trading to Resume

By Sun Yongjian

With the approval of the State Council and the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC), trading of fuel oil futures will start again one the the Shanghai Futures Exchange (SHFE), a senior exchange official said on Tuesday. The official did not specify exactly when the trading would resume.

China has replaced Japan to become the world’s second-largest consumer of fuel oil, according to some SHFE statistics. China burned through about 44 million tons of fuel oil in 2003, accounting for a large proportion of national annual oil consumption. However, domestic output has nearly halved to 20 million tons last year from 1999, and imports make up about 80 percent of all fuel oil used.

Shell CFO Resigns After Scandal

London, April 21 (AP, Bloomberg) - A top executive of Royal Dutch/Shell Group wrote in an e-mail that he was "sick and tired of lying" about the company's inflated oil-and-gas-reserves estimates, an investigation commissioned by Shell reported yesterday.

The investigation, whose findings Shell accepted in full, found some bosses knew for almost two years that the company had publicly overstated the size of its reserves. The oil giant also said its chief financial officer had stepped down.

Walter van de Vijver, Shell's division executive for oil exploration and production, complained about the estimates after he took over as chief of the division in June 2001, replacing Sir Philip Watts, who had been promoted to Shell chairman, the summary said.

Watts and van de Vijver resigned last

month after lawyers at the New York-based Davis, Polk and Wardwell firm gave Shell a preliminary version of their report, prepared with former and current Shell employees.

Shell said yesterday it had downgraded 4.35 billion barrels, or about 22 percent of its reserves, from "proven" to less-certain categories. It said in January that it was downgrading 3.9 billion barrels, or about 20 percent of its total holdings.

Shell's chief financial officer Judith Boynton resigned yesterday over the same case.

"Shell has unquestionably stumbled and has learned a tough lesson," said Lord Oxburgh, chairman of Shell Transport and Trading, the British component of the Anglo-Dutch group, calling the inaccurate estimates a "major embarrassment."

Analyst's Take:

Shell is now involved in 15 lawsuits in the US following this scandal.

Six were launched following its announcement in January, and another six were launched in February after the US regulator, the Securities and Exchange Commission, launched a probe into the affair. Three further lawsuits were announced last month, as Shell's chairman Sir Philip Watts, and head of exploration and production van de Vijver, were ousted.

Shell has long been advised to create a single global HQ in London with a sole listing on the London stock market, as opposed to listings in the UK and the Netherlands, to increase the group's transparency.

Analysts are blaming the scandal on

Shell's insular culture. Shell recruited a lone part-time employee to do the reserve estimates. The senior leadership is seen as lacking adequate oversight.

"There was just a massive breakdown in internal controls; there was no real accountability, and the reporting lines were incredibly blurred," Reuters quoted an analyst of Investec Securities as saying.

Shell is made up of two separate companies, Netherlands-based Royal Dutch Petroleum and UK-headquartered Shell Transport and Trading Co. The entities have separate boards, and Shell only recently began asserting control of subsidiaries around the world that once ran themselves.

— Ji Lehang, senior reporter, International Finance News, April 22

Rato Set To Head IMF

London, April 21 (AFP) - Spain's former finance minister Rodrigo Rato is in line to become the next head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Rato's hopes received a boost after his rival French contender Jean Lemierre was re-elected to another four years as president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development which was created in 1991 to help assist the transition of former communist nations to market economies.

Funded by its 184 member countries, the IMF in turn gives advice and lends money to members to foster economic reform.

Asia Oil Imports Hit All-Time High

Singapore, April 19 (Reuters) - Oil demand in Asia hit a peak at 21.6 million barrels daily last year and the region's dependence on oil imports reached an all-time high at 64 percent, according to a report released this week by Hawaii-based business consultants FACTS Inc.

The report forecasts that Asia's dependence on imports will rise to 69 percent by 2010 based on a demand projection of 25.2 million barrels per day as regional output of crude stays flat but demand continues to grow.

McDonald's Picks Aussie Boss

Sydney, Australia, April 21 (AP) - The new global boss of McDonald's started flipping burgers 28 years ago in Sydney's southern suburbs.

At 15, Charlie Bell took a \$2.48 an hour job near his home in working class Kingsford. Now 43, he has been anointed as McDonald's first non-American, and youngest-ever, chief executive, earning \$5.9 million a year.

At the same restaurant where Bell once worked the grill, mopped the floors, and scooped up french fries, customers on Tuesday cheered the local boy who made good.

"Wow. Good on him. That's a remarkable achievement," said Gino, a regular diner who declined to give his last name.

Bell was named head of the world's largest restaurant chain on Monday, just hours after chief executive Jim Cantalupo, 60, died of a heart attack at the company-sponsored convention in Orlando, Florida.

Bell's ascent was meteoric. He became Australia's youngest store manager at 19 and a vice president eight years later.

In 1993, Bell was appointed managing director of McDonald's Australia and headed Asian operations in 1999. He then took over the presidency for Europe. Before he was appointed as CEO, Bell had been international president and chief operating officer.

Bell is now responsible for more than 30,000 restaurants in 118 countries.

(Jamie Tarabay)

Local Media Reports:

Jim Cantalupo joined McDonald's in 1974, became its international president in 1987, and global president and vice chairman in 1999. He explored the markets in Russia, China and Eastern Europe for McDonald's.

Cantalupo called for adjusting the menus and tastes of McDonald's food in different regions and countries, which became a successful business tactic for the group. McDonald's used to accept cash only but Cantalupo asked outlets worldwide to accept credit cards, which also succeeded in raising business volume.

Under his leadership, McDonald's saw a rapid expansion worldwide, from 2,350 outlets to 15,000.

His successor, Jack Greenberg, continued this rapid expansion, increasing the number to 30,000. But McDonald's saw a crisis emerging after so much expansion. In December 2002, the retired Jim Cantalupo was recalled to the position of McDonald's chairman.

Cantalupo decided to launch alternative menus, most of which used other meats or vegetables. This followed the global trend for 'healthy' food and helped turn the group's fortunes around.

— People's Daily, April 21; Beijing Evening News, April 21



Ryan Fitzroy, 14, prepares burgers at the McDonald's restaurant in Kingsford, Sydney, Tuesday, April 20, where newly appointed chief executive and president Charlie Bell began his career 28 years ago.

AP Photo



Eastward Expansion, Again!

A public billboard in Berlin celebrates the EU expansion set for May 1. The new round of expansion will increase the number of member countries from current 15 to 25. The newcomers are: the Czech Republic,

Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania, and Bulgaria.

More importantly, the expansion occurs only one month after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

expanded eastward. On April 2, NATO absorbed seven East European countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia and Slovakia into the military body.

Xinhua Photo

Putin' Up the Salary

Moscow, April 18 (Guardian) - Russian President Vladimir Putin has come up with a novel way to fight corruption. In one of the first big reforms of his second term, he has doubled his own salary and raised those of his ministers by five times.

Bribe-taking is rife among the army of bureaucrats who retain a stranglehold on Russian business and society. Yet a presidential move to stem this damaging influence on the country's pride and economic development has started with incentives at the top.

Russian media reported last week that Mr Putin signed a decree on April 10 increasing the salaries of about 10 per cent of federal officials.

Respected business daily *Vedomosti* said the decree gave Mr Putin a 100 per cent pay rise. His salary last year was 840,000 roubles (\$39,500) but will this year be about 1.75 million roubles.

Ministers' salaries will rise five times to about \$48,300 a year.

Although a report appeared in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, the state newspaper, a Kremlin spokeswoman declined to give official confirmation of the changes.

Analyst's Take:

It would be a miracle if Putin could fight the corruption which has become common from the upper class to the grassroots in Russia by increasing the wages of his ministers, federal officials and himself.

Corruption originates from poverty and an endless appetite. To fight against corruption, economic development is the fundamental way, because only by increasing the wealth of individuals can you reduce their appetite for money and fortune.

Mr Putin has declared his entire capital assets at about 8 million roubles, as well as two small flats, some shares and a field near Moscow. He will now earn a sixth of US President George Bush's salary.

(Nick Paton Walsh)

Russia has never been a rich country. Therefore, the fight against corruption has a long way to go.

The only explanation is that Putin wants to consolidate and unite the workforce of his federal government. Putin's decision has received complaints from the opposition parties and the people, which should be a warning to himself and his government.

— Zhu Jingcheng, senior researcher, Chinese Institute of International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

USA Today Editor Quits

New York, April 21 (AP) - The editor of *USA Today*, the country's largest-selling newspaper, retired Tuesday amid a scandal over fabrications and deceptions by Jack Kelley, one of the paper's former star reporters.

Karen Jurgensen, 55, had been the paper's editor since 1999. Her departure came on the heels of a comprehensive report on the Kelley fiasco compiled by three veteran newspaper editors.

Craig Moon, *USA Today*'s publisher, has not yet released any details about the report's contents or its recommendations. He has said he plans to do so some time this week.

Kelley resigned under pressure in January after admitting to trying to deceive

editors checking into the veracity of some of his reporting. A subsequent inquiry found that he made up major parts of at least eight stories and committed several acts of plagiarism.

Steven Anderson, a spokesman for the newspaper, said the paper would not be making any comments on the departure beyond a brief statement that Moon sent to *USA Today* staffers Tuesday afternoon.

In the statement, Moon said Jurgensen's departure "opens the door to move the *USA Today* brand forward under new leadership." He said a search for new editor was under way.

The scandal deeply embarrassed *USA Today*, which fought for years to overcome perceptions that it gave seri-

ous news topics short shrift with brief news articles and catchy headlines. The newspaper is the largest-circulation daily in the United States and the flagship publication of Gannett Co., the nation's biggest newspaper publisher.

Kelley spent 21 years at the newspaper, starting out around the time of its founding and rising to become a globe-trotting foreign correspondent reporting from various hot spots. He co-authored two books with *USA Today* founder Al Neuharth.

Kelley spoke to various groups on behalf of *USA Today*, and the newspaper nominated him for the Pulitzer Prize five times.

The debacle at *USA Today* had several parallels with a

plagiarism scandal last year at *The New York Times* involving Jayson Blair, who plagiarized or fabricated dozens of stories. The paper's top two editors resigned in the aftermath of that scandal, which exposed deep tensions in the paper's newsroom.

(Seth Sutel)



Karen Jurgensen announced she is retiring.

AP Photo



A mock-up of the Jakarta Tower

AP Photo

Indonesia To Build World's Tallest Tower

Jakarta, April 19 (AFP) - Indonesia is building the tallest tower in the world.

The Jakarta Tower, located at the Kemayoran district in Jakarta, and will stand 558 meters tall, surpassing the Canadian National Tower in Toronto which is 553 meters high.

Work is expected to end in 2009. Construction was due to start in the late 1990s but the 1997 regional financial crisis led to a postponement. The project is being financed by local tycoons and is projected to cost \$400 million.

eBay to Expand in China

San Jose, California, April 22 (AP) - eBay's first-quarter earnings were a record \$756.2 million, up 59 percent from the same period last year, according to the company's latest earnings report which also emphasized that eBay would "invest aggressively" in China. The company plans to create a Chinese site staffed by local employees in the country.

eBay president and chief executive Meg Whitman said Wednesday in Hong Kong that China could eclipse Germany and England to become eBay's second largest market within 10 to 15 years.

(Rachel Konrad)

New DVD Player Filters Content

Los Angeles, April 19 (AP) - Thomson, which owns the RCA brand, will sell a new DVD player that filters content deemed objectionable. The new DVD player can automatically mute foul language or skip violence.

The filtering software is provided by ClearPlay, which had offered it previously for watching DVDs on computers and began talking to RCA last year about a standalone player.

The players are now on sale in some Wal-Mart and Kmart stores as well as on Wal-Mart's website worldwide.

(Gary Gentile)

Tricky Taxi Drivers Mar City Image

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Local taxi drivers have been the subject of many promotional campaigns over the past few years, asked to learn English, to stop smoking, and to generally provide optimal service as potential projectors of the city's image. It seems, however, that not all drivers have been listening.

Last week, *Beijing Today* received a letter from a Norwegian man who visited the city this month and had a very unpleasant encounter with a local cabbie.

Erik Hodneland came to Beijing on vacation in early April with his wife and three children.

One morning during their trip they piled into a taxi in order to go to the Beijing Aquarium inside the Beijing Zoo.

The taxi driver told them there was little to see at that aquarium and recommended they go to a "bigger and better" one near the China Central Television Tower in Haidian.

"We believed him since taxi drivers usually are very knowledgeable about their city, and the driver proclaimed that he had been to all the aquariums in Beijing," wrote Hodneland in the letter.

However, after paying a total

of 160 yuan in entrance fees, the family was disappointed with the site, and staff inside even told them that the Beijing Aquarium was much larger. They left and headed back to that site, at which point another taxi driver explained that their first cabbie was probably after the 90 yuan commissions regularly handed out by the CCTV tower.

"I can't believe the driver would directly lie to us," Hodneland told *Beijing Today*. "Later that day, when we left the wrong aquarium and wanted to take a taxi to the right one, another taxi driver deliberately lied to us say-

ing that the zoo and the aquarium there both were closed and he could drive us to Tian'anmen instead - a longer trip for him."

The angry Norweigan said he had filed a complaint with the manager of the first driver's taxi company and demanded an apology from the driver himself and a refund for the costs of the tickets to the CCTV tower, but received no answer. He told *Beijing Today* that he liked Beijing a great deal and was worried that such dishonest taxi drivers could tarnish the city's image as the 2008 Olympics draw nearer.



David Copperfield teaches a trick to a young man at the China Rehabilitation Research Center for the launch of his philanthropic Project Magic on Wednesday.

Photo by Wei Tong

Magic Man Wows Again

By Xiao Yingying

Master illusionist David Copperfield returned to the capital on April 20 with a huge show at Capital Gymnasium. This year's event included many of his familiar slight-of-hand and grander tricks, but stood out from past versions with lots of audience involvement.

Among the tricks Copperfield pulled from extensive bag were seeming to cut himself in half with a massive saw and making two people randomly selected from the audience fly while riding a sofa in a glass box.

In arguably his most dramatic, even questionable trick, Copperfield told the crowd he was going to choose one woman from the audience and almost instantly get her pregnant. The crowd was shocked when the subject of

his affections turned out to be an old lady, but minutes later, the results of an ultrasound check were shown on a large screen, revealing the surprised woman was in fact with child.

This is Copperfield's third and longest China tour, which will take him to five domestic cities. Local shows run through Sunday, after which he will head to Hangzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai and Changsha.

Copperfield's successful 2002 Magic Time Space Travel Show sparked nationwide magic fever in China, and plenty of normal people starting trying their hand at simple tricks. The master himself has admitted that magic is often a low-tech art that relies on psychological misdirection as much, if not more, than technological wizardry.



Photo by Su Guanming

By Zhou Ying

Seconds of near zero-gravity and other extraterrestrial thrills have been drawing hordes to the massive Space Travel show that opened last Sunday at the Haidian Exhibition Center in Beijing.

Tamara Davies, the image representa-

tive for the exhibition, arrived in Beijing last Saturday to promote the event and get the city excited about space. The star in the upcoming film *Deep Rescue*, an exciting tale of a space shuttle accident, praised China's space exploration efforts and the country's decision to select wom-

en to its astronaut training program.

The four-month exhibition was organized by US-based Newshen International specifically for the China market. The concept is to integrate science education and entertainment into one fun, profitable event.



Police feared Yang Wei was reaching for a weapon when he was shot.

Photo provided by Beijing Daily Messenger

Police Shoot Driver Dead after Wild Highway Chase

By Zhou Ying

A native of Hebei Province was shot dead by police in Beijing on Sunday after he stole a truck and crashed into 24 other vehicles, including two police vans, during a dangerous chase on a local highway. Eight passengers on a bus rammed by the truck were injured in the incident.

Yang Wei stole the orange-colored truck from a village in Changping District Sunday morning and drove onto the Badaling Expressway at 9:28 am, steering wildly and smashing into a few other vehicles.

Police were quickly informed of the theft and arrived at the scene, but were not able to immediately corral Yang, as he smashed through four police roadblocks. The situation spun out of control after he reached a toll booth blocking the whole highway, wheeled the truck around and started heading against traffic.

The truck finally came to a halt after smashing into two minibuses. The police evacuated people inside the damaged vehicles and then fired warning shots hoping to get Yang to surrender. But he just took off again and proceeded to run into two police cars, a street cleaning vehicle and a bus parked on the roadside at the intersection of the expressway and the North Sixth Ring Road.

The truck stopped again. An eyewitness told the *Beijing Daily Messenger* newspaper that two policemen stood in front of the truck, one armed with a pistol and the other a submachine gun, and ordered the crazed driver to put his hands on his head. Yang refused and started screaming at the police officers.

Two minutes later, he began rummag-

ing through a bag for an unknown object and the officer with the machine gun shot him dead.

A preliminary investigation showed that Yang stole the truck after arguing with its owner, his former employer, after he was fired two days before. According to a *Beijing Youth Daily* report on Wednesday, Yang called his father last Friday night to tell him to take care because he was not long for this world.

An official from the public relations department of the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau, who spoke under condition his name not be used, told *Beijing Today* that nobody was allowed to give any details except the department's deputy section chief. That official has not been available for contact or comment.

On Tuesday, local police announced that Yang's crime was theft and disruption of social order.

The crime and the shooting have sparked widespread public debate about whether deadly force was needed in the incident and whether other, less final, alternatives were possible.

Wu Xiaokang, a law student at Beijing Industry and Commerce University, told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday that Yang deserved a fair trial before being executed. "I think it would have been a better choice to shoot him to wound him and then take him into custody," Wu said.

According to Chinese law, police are entitled to use force, including deadly force, in situations where there is no safe time to give a warning or when a warning may only result in a worse final result.

The case is still under investigation.

Ignored Migrant Workers Sue Government

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The Daxing District People's Court convened on Monday to hear a lawsuit file by 68 migrant workers from Hebei Province against the Daxing District Labor and Social Security Bureau for nonfeasance.

Since December 2001, Guo Zengguang, the representative of the disgruntled workers, has visited the bureau several times seeking help in getting payments owed them by the Hongdayinglong Paper Company.

However, the Daxing Labor Bureau never heeded his calls nor looked into the matter.

Guo told *Beijing Daily Messenger* on Tuesday that they started working in October 2001 for the paper company and stopped one month later. They were hired by a man named Qu Wenbo to build a paper storeroom in Daxing District in the name of the Tenth Construction Company of Hebei Dingzhou and promised daily wages of 30 to 40 yuan each.

According to Guo, the construction workers wanted to sign a legally binding contracts but Qu refused. The workers abandoned the project in November after Qu failed to provide them with safety helmets and other equipment. Before leaving, they demanded they receive their back pay, totaling over 30,000 yuan.

Over the following three years, Guo repeatedly contacted Qu about the money, but to no avail. One time when he went to another building site run by Qu, he was beaten and his jacket torn.

In the end, Guo put his hopes in the Daxing Labor Bureau and reported the event in hopes the officials could get their money. However, Guo and the others were later informed that Qu was employed personally by Zhang Xiuying, manager of the Hongdayinglong Storage Company, an enterprise actually founded after their ill-fated project. Bureau staff explained that because Qu was not actually from the construction company and the 68 workers were employed personally and without contracts, the dispute was outside the bureau's jurisdiction.

The plaintiffs' attorney told *Beijing Daily Messenger* that the Daxing Labor Bureau did a poor job of investigating the case. While Zhang Xiuying is currently manager of the storage company, she previously was also the manager of the Hongdayinglong Paper Company. Therefore, Qu could not be considered personally hired and the bureau should handle the dispute and get the company to pay the workers.

The hearing is scheduled to last several more days and the court has yet to issue any related statements.



Bars on the new trains are open 24 hours.

Photo by Photocom

Riding the Fast Train

By Xiao Yingying

The new Z-9 non-stop passenger train from Beijing to Hangzhou roared out of Beijing Railway Station at 6:53 pm last Saturday, marking the beginning of the country's fifth campaign to boost railway speed.

All but one of the 19 new Z lines run in and out of Beijing, the only exception being the Tianjin-Shanghai line. The other routes connect the capital to such major cities as Shanghai, Changchun, Changsha and Xi'an. All the non-stop trains depart at night and arrive at their destinations the next morning.

Besides their speed, the new trains also stand out with the quality and comfort. Gone are the hard seats of old in favor of airplane-like soft seats all headed in the direction the train travels. Prices of soft seats and sleepers on Z-line trains, however, are the same as on the slower T-line trains.

After taking her first ride on the Z-1 train from Beijing to Shanghai, Zeng Luna told the *Beijing News* on Monday, "I have traveled by train in France and Russia, but their trains can't compare to ours in terms of equipment and services. It's really amazing."

Blanket Thrown on "Naked Sushi"

By Dong Nan

After shutting down its controversial "naked sushi" meals at the request of local authorities on April 5, the Hefeng Village Restaurant in Kunming, Yunnan Province, and its owner Kunming Xiaoyi Entertainment Company were still slapped with a 2,000 yuan fine on Monday.

"Naked sushi" is a Japanese style of food service in which pieces of sushi, sashimi and other food are placed on the naked body of a young woman. The Hefeng Village Restaurant introduced the concept to China on April 2 at a price of 1,000 yuan per person per meal.

After the restaurant invited nearly 30 local papers and TV sta-

tions to observe, the fishy story spread nationwide, sparking diverse public opinions. *Beijing Today* first reported on the controversial dining style on April 9, four days after it was first banned by the Yunnan Health Bureau on grounds that the two models involved did not have necessary health licenses as food industry workers.

On April 8, the Yunnan Women's Association publicly condemned the service as an insult to all women.

In handing down the fine, the Health Bureau and Trade Bureau of Xishan District, Kunming said that "naked sushi" was amoral, discriminatory and violated the Civil Law and Women Rights Protecting Law of China.

Are They Just Scapegoats?

By Zhou Ying

Three high-level officials were forced to resign last week because of three deadly industrial disasters since the end of last year. Some say this indicates a new atmosphere of accountability for China's officials. Others complain that these officials are merely being used as scapegoats.

The government scrambled to find out what had happened after the disasters and the investigation team found out that they had been caused mainly by a lack of proper management and failing to finalize security measures. Therefore, 68 people were given disciplinary punishment for being negligent in safety supervision.

The State Council last Wednesday approved the resignation of General Manager Ma Fucai of the China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC) over the deadly gas blowout on December 23 last year in Chongqing which killed 243 people. The accident occurred when a CNPC drilling crew ruptured a gas well and dismantled safety equipment that might have stopped the blowout.

Other company personnel, including Vice-General Manager Ren Chuanjun, were also given disciplinary punishment for being negligent in safety supervision.

Zhang Wen, the governor of Miyun, resigned last Thursday because of the Lantern Festival stampede in the Beijing suburb of Miyun on February 5 that left 37



Ma Fucai

people dead, and 15 wounded.

The Zhongbai shopping mall fire in Northeast China's Jilin Province 10 days later killed 54 people and left more than 70 wounded. The Jilin Provincial Party Committee last Saturday approved the resignation of Mayor Gang Zhanbiao of Jilin City, and others found responsible were given serious disciplinary punishment.

It's unusual for so many high ranking officials to be punished within such a short time in China. There is a heated discussion going on now among the public. Some regard this phenomenon as progress in China's political system, but others are less certain.

Liu Xiaoying, an International Relations expert with Beijing Broadcasting Institute

I think The State Council's imposition of severe punishment upon those responsible for major accidents signals the government's determination to safeguard people's rights and interests and its resolve to take action sternly and responsibly.



The pictures of the victims who died in the gas blowout in Chongqing

The decision is welcome not only because it reflects the government's "put people first" attitude and courage to avenge the victims, but also because it sounds an alarm to those officials who continue to hold a negligent attitude towards their work.

It was reported that Hong Hu, Governor of Jilin Province, wrote an open letter of apology to his people for the fatal fire in his province, the first open apology made by a provincial-level official in many years.

An apology cannot solve problems, but it indicates an increasing awareness on the part of government officials that they sometimes make mistakes.

However, it is just the first step towards the transformation of the function of the government. They need to standardize this process of punishing officials if they are guilty of such oversights, and that will take a long time. Some people want the system to become a normal and common practice. But that raises questions: how do you define acts that deserve punishment, and when is an official guilty of dereliction of duty?

Mao Shoulong, a professor at Renmin University

An official should shoulder moral responsibility for victims and the public, and legal responsibility for the related laws and it must be found out whether one has committed dereliction of duty. In this sense, Ma Fucai, as the boss of CNPC and an official at ministerial level, should indeed shoulder moral and political responsibilities for the accident.

An official has to take responsibility for certain job-related risks in moral, executive, political and other fields even if he himself isn't directly guilty of a particular mistake.

It is neither possible nor necessary for Ma Fucai, as general manager of CNPC, to check the security and rescue measures of a specific well belonging to a subsid-

iary company. So he has no direct responsibility for the accident. But it was under his leadership that some CNPC staff members failed to take effective safety and rescue measures.

This has all changed people's sense of public power. Poor management, mediocre performance, inappropriate use of human resources and wrong decision-making, these are acts which could hardly be investigated in the past but now they can knock an official out of his post.

Shi Yi, a postgraduate in law

There is a trend to unduly exaggerate the impact of these punishments. The suggestion is still that officials should shoulder responsibility conscientiously. That is to say, for certain officials, whether to remain or resign depends on their own minds. We cannot force them to resign.

It shouldn't just be a matter of attitude. The system requires a sound supervision system, and strict responsibility mechanism. There is absolutely no good in exaggerating the benefits of these punishments.

Shen Runzhou, a student in Beijing

In western countries, official accountability has been applied for many years. But we should be careful about introducing such a system into China.

It requires a clear division of rights and responsibilities, but given the political system in China, it is hard to say that we have a clear division.

In a society with sound government, every official should take responsibility, not just the top level. As far as I know, the top official is not the person directly in charge of security. What he should do is supervise other officials, rather than be responsible for everything.

The system of accountability is a new thing in China, which needs to be standardized. The most important thing is that responsibility should be clear. We should try to avoid spoiling things by excessive enthusiasm; maybe the slower, the better.

Ralph Jennings, an American teacher with Beijing Broadcasting Institute

Resignations are a common way for governments or companies to show the public that they take accidents seriously. Yes, American agencies and businesses do the same to try to boost their public images after mishaps.

However, accidents are seldom one person's fault. Safety depends on every common person taking responsibility. Ordinary people's everyday habits of pushing and crowding caused the Miyun accident, for example, making it hard for any authorities to prevent.

I'd rather know not about resignations but instead how the new leaders, after taking post, will stop fires and other accidents. I'd like to see their plans for making sure crowds don't form — hard to prevent in China — and regular safety inspections. And I'd like to see them do it routinely, not just right after an accident or because the central government has sent orders.

By Sun Ming/Xiao Yingying

Fingerprint identification technology was used for the Self-study Examination of Higher Education last weekend in Shenyang, China's northeast Liaoning Province.

It was the first time in China for fingerprint identification technology to be used to guard against cheating in an exam.

According to the Liaoning Provincial Self-study Examination office, the examinees stored their fingerprints at local registration offices when they registered to take part in the exam last month. Before the exam, the students had their fingerprints checked.

"If the fingerprints don't match, the student will lose the right to take part in the exam," Wang Hui, a staff member from the Liaoning Provincial Self-study Examination office, told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.

"Cheating in the self-study examinations is becoming rampant in China. That's why we decided to use fingerprint identification technology," said Wang.

The Self-study Examination for Higher Education, a program for those who study by themselves, started in 1981 mainly in urban areas. Those who pass the exam get a certificate equivalent to that of a college degree.

According to the China Higher Education Self-Study Supervision Committee, more than three million people have obtained the diploma over the past two decades, with over 100 million others applying for the exam.

According to the Liaoning Provincial Self-study Examination office, various methods have been invented by examinees to cheat in the exams, in particular paying graduates to act as stand-ins. Staff started checking photos in examination permits against ID cards, but a market in fake permits and ID cards sprung up.

Now, fingerprint checks are seen as the best way to identify the examinees.

However, fingerprints are considered by some people to be connected with one's privacy and honor. So controversy has arisen over whether this is a feasible way to cut down on cheating and whether it is possible to

Fingering the Cheats

New ID system to crack down on exam cheats



The examinees register their fingerprints before taking the exam

promote it nationwide. Opinions follow:

Mr. Yan, a self-study examinee in Beijing, who has passed 15 of the exams set for an undergraduate

I think it's good news. Nowadays, it's becoming more and more difficult for us to find a job. Why? It's because the recruiting managers don't believe in our certificates. They doubt our abilities. The few cheats spoil our efforts. Cheating is really rampant, especially in provinces outside Beijing. Fingerprint identification is a good way to improve people's trust in our certificate, so I believe most of the self-study examinees, especially those keen on acquiring something from their self study, would support this move. Actually, restrictions on cheating are never strict enough. The stricter, the better. Just as the old Chinese

saying goes, those who have a clear conscience will not be afraid of ghosts at their door.

Mr. Zhang, also an examinee in Beijing, who has only passed four tests after two years' study

Fingerprint collection for all the examinees indicates they're all under suspicion. It's a humiliation for us. I don't think it is proper to infringe on the interests and honor of the majority of people. Besides, I think adoption of this method only for self-study exams shows discrimination against us. Why don't they apply it to other exams like CET-4 which must be passed for a college student to get their degree? Cheating in this exam is also rampant. Moreover, punishment of the cheats in our self-study exams is more severe. If you're found cheating, you're

prohibited from attending exams for the next two years, and you have to start from scratch two years later as all the other passed subjects would be cancelled. So this discrimination is a violation of human rights more than a means of identification. It's unfair.

Wu Xue, a policewoman from Qingdao

I just regard it as commonplace. The reason for fussy complaints is the old ideas in people's minds. People used to link fingerprint identification with something disgraceful. In the feudal society, poor people, mostly illiterate, signed contracts by pressing their fingerprints. And law enforcement agencies routinely fingerprint people who are arrested to find out their true identity. But with the upgrading of technology, fingerprints are more and more widely used in our daily life. Applicants for jobs requiring security clearance and those applying for licenses and permits are also fingerprinted. So there is nothing special in it. Its function is similar to the name and photo on your ID card, only more difficult to counterfeit. Maybe some day in the future, fingerprints will also be used in ID cards.

Ms. Lee, a company clerk with junior middle school education

I object to the use of fingerprint identification. To be frank, I don't think the cheats are to blame. Why would some people risk cheating just to get a degree? It's not of their own will; it's because of the social pressure imposed on them. I don't know why many firms set such high academic standards. In my view, a degree is not so important as one's all-round abilities. Take myself as an example. I am a salesgirl with a handmade gift company. Every day, I contact a lot of VIPs, most of whom have amazing educational background. But I can persuade them into buying our products at a price 100 times our production cost. Besides, many of my col-

leagues who have better education can't match me in sales achievements.

Ms. Luo, teacher at the Beijing Technology Research and Learning Institute, a privately-owned training school for self-study exams

I support this measure against cheating. The importance lies in its implications. It sends a warning signal to the lazy, unenthusiastic students. They can't expect to benefit from cheating. The only way is to work hard. Besides, this is also a stimulant to the excellent students, as they will feel their efforts are more likely to be repaid. So this could improve the study atmosphere of the whole campus. As to the adoption of fingerprint identification nationwide, I only worry about the cost and technical requirements. As our national economy is not developing in a balanced way, the western regions may find it financially and technically difficult to apply the method.

A director at the Beijing Yuanmingyuan Institute, another privately-owned training school for self-study exams

In my view, fingerprint identification is improper. The Education Department of China has taken new measures this year to cut down on cheating from the very root - such as requiring a signature representing the examinees' responsibility to bear the consequences of cheating. Fingerprint identification is necessary in police stations, but I don't think it should be used for students. We should try to foster integrity and honesty in the students.

Ms. Wu, professor of law at the University of International Relations

The legality of the move is not in question. There is no law or regulation prohibiting the collection of fingerprints for administrative needs. It's not against the law but it is contrary to people's usual way of dealing with things. Although there is no specific domestic human rights law, protection of human rights is embodied throughout our constitution and in related laws and regulations. I think fingerprint identification is just a way to better protect the human rights of those abiding by the law.

By Dong Nan

Sure, if you feel lonely, bored and you've got a computer by hand, cyber love may seem like a great way to kill time. According to a survey by sina.com, which involved more than 17,000 Internet surfers, 69% of them had already tried it. Another survey by sohu.com found that more than 50% of net surfers "trust cyber love".

The most convenient place to talk with an online lover is a chat room. According to a survey by the Chinese Internet Culture Association, 97% of Internet surfers have tried communicating with others in chat rooms. And there's plenty of choice, with around 2,500 large-scale chat rooms available to Chinese surfers.

Popular as it is, reports are continuously emerging of cyber lovers being cheated, hurt or involved in scandals. Not only have marriages been ruined in real life, but more serious and dangerous situations have also arisen.

Love rat

This month, netizens have been expressing their anger in a forum run by Netease, one of the most influential websites in China, about one of the forum's former administrators, whose net name was Kuaile Buyi (A Happy Plain Man). Apparently, he cheated some of the female forum users out of hundreds of thousands of yuan.

According to Hanqiong Diming (Cold Song of Crickets), one of the female victims, Kuaile Buyi was good at writing, a skill that helped him become an administrator on the Netease page in which he talked about feelings and love. Many women adored him.

After her marriage broke up, Hanqiong Diming found herself falling in love with Kuaile Buyi, and she believed that he loved her deeply. However, after they met at the beginning of 2004, he asked her to lend him 50,000 yuan, since his former girlfriend was dying of cancer.

Hanqiong Diming was moved by his kindness and gave him the money. But then Kuaile Buyi disappeared and she didn't see him again. After that Hanqiong Diming realized she had been cheated.

In February this year, Hanqiong Diming posted her story in the Netease forum. She wasn't surprised when she found out that other female net surfers had had similar experiences. One of them even lent Kuaile Buyi 150,000 yuan this March.

However, these female victims were unwilling to sue Kuaile Buyi, since most of them were married and could not afford such a big scandal.

Till now, Kuaile Buyi has not been found or punished.

"What he did damaged people's trust in the Internet, and hurt people's most beautiful feel-

Cyber Love Criminals

Reports are continuously emerging of cyber lovers being cheated, hurt or involved in scandals. Not only have marriages been ruined in real life, but more serious and dangerous situations have also arisen.

ings," said Sophiedream, a net surfer on Netease.

In fact, many people have had unfortunate experiences in relationships with cyber lovers, but not all of them were as unlucky as Kuaile Buyi's "lovers".

"Last year, I dated a girl several times after meeting her in a chatroom," said Hongchen Jianghu (Dust and Rivers), a postgraduate student, to *Beijing Today*. "She was less than 20 years old and told me she was a college student."

But the girl asked Hongchen Jianghu to lend her 2,000 yuan. He told her he would like to help her, but he was a poor student as well and so much money was beyond his means. The girl immediately broke off contact with him.

"At that time, I felt my heart was broken, but it's better than having my wallet broken. Compared with the women who were cheated by Kuaile Buyi, I think I was lucky," said Hongchen Jianghu.

Lovers become rapists

On April 4, police in Chaohu, Anhui saved 18-year-old Cheng Anfang, a middle school student, from a local warehouse. She was taken there by her cyber lover, "Handsome Man", two weeks before.

The two met in a chat room and started dating on March 20. Together with an accomplice, Handsome Man started feeding Cheng with sleeping pills. They took some naked photos of her and then raped

her. After that, they took her to a warehouse and forced her to prostitute herself.

There have been numerous cases of teenagers being taken advantage of in this way. In August last year, Beijing citizen Liu Lumin was sentenced to four years in prison for sexually abusing Weiwei, a 13-year-old girl.

Weiwei met Liu online in 2002. the 43-year-old man was considerate, humorous and passionate. Weiwei fell in love with him immediately and made love with him after their first date. After that, he took Weiwei out and continuously had sexual intercourse with her.

One time, Weiwei was away

from her family for 40 days, during which time Liu offered her drugs. It was only then that Weiwei began to regret her actions. She decided to sue Liu.

In court, Liu claimed that he did not know Weiwei was only 13, and he said everything that happened had been with both sides' consent. However, Weiwei's mother said in court that she had told Liu how old Weiwei was several times.

But teenagers are not only victims. Yang, an 18-year-old girl in Changsha, Hunan dated her cyber lover, "Hug You and Kiss You". After he suggested making love, she refused, so he raped her and stole her money.

When police traced "Hug You and Kiss You" to a net cafe in Xiangtan on April 6, they found he was only 16 years old. He admitted that he had raped several other cyber lovers and taken their money as well. All the girls had been around 16 - 18 years old.

"Teenagers are easily influenced, and they do not have much social experience. Besides, many teenagers do not know how to protect their privacy on the Internet and they willingly give their personal information to strangers, such as true names, telephone numbers, schools

and addresses. This makes it easy for them to become targets of criminals," said Zhang Xuemei, vice chief of Beijing Legal Aid and Research Center for Children.

"And of course, pornography and deviant pages on the Internet play a negative role here," said Zhang.

Zhang said that teenagers are not the only people who need to be educated about using the Internet. She suggested that parents and teachers should improve their knowledge about it as well, "so they can be aware of what children and students are doing on the Internet."

Lovers become killers

On February 15, a man was found trying to commit suicide at his home in Wuhan. Afterwards, he admitted that he had killed his cyber lover the evening before on Valentine's Day.

The man, with the net name "Flying Dust", got to know his cyber lover "Rain Drop", a 25-year-old flower store keeper, at the end of 2003. But Rain Drop's parents disapproved of her having such an intimate cyber relationship. So on Valentine's Day, she told Flying Dust that she had to break up with him. He flew into a rage and strangled her, and then tried to cut the arteries on his neck and wrists.

"I love her, I want to be with her forever," he said later, when asked why he had done it.

On April 7, a man's body was found in a hotel room in Dengshikou, Beijing. The man, called Zhang Yang, had been killed by his cyber lover, Liang Yixia, because he refused to marry her. Liang was arrested when she came back to get her mobile phone recharger.

According to Liang, in May 2003 she had been raped by three men she met on the Internet, and they also took her money. After that, Zhang, a seemingly gentle and rich man, renewed her trust in cyber love. But after they had sex, he told her that it was impossible for him to marry a cyber lover. Liang felt so humiliated that she fed him with sleeping pills and then strangled him with adhesive tape.

At the police station Liang said she felt no regret for what she had done. "He deserved this punishment," she said repeatedly.

However, it's not all bad news. "In real life you come across various bad things, such as cheating, sexual abuse and murder. But that's not all you find," said 30-year-old Liu Jiantao, who met his wife on the Internet. The couple will celebrate their wedding anniversary in June.

"Surfing on the Internet and having cyber lovers are the same thing. Like in real life, sincerity, responsibility and self-discipline are needed. And you always have to be cautious and know how to protect yourself," he said.

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By Sun Ming / Wang Fang

Since last May, 171 babies from rural areas in Fuyang, Anhui Province have suffered from a strange disease.

When they were born, they were quite healthy. However, after being fed milk powder, their heads became swollen, their bodies failed to grow properly and they became weak. Local people called them "big head babies".

Until now, thirteen of the infants affected have died of nutritional deficiencies. What disease is this, and how did they catch it?

The tragedy has caught national attention. Premier Wen Jiabao has vowed a thorough investigation and severe penalties for the producers of the fake milk powder. An investigation team comprising experts from the State Bureau of Quality and Technical Supervision, the Ministry of Public Health and the National Administration Bureau for Industry and Commerce went to Fuyang, Anhui on Monday.

Who killed the babies?

Six-month-old Li Kan has not been breast fed by his mother. Instead, he received "Pu Meng" milk powder produced in Heilongjiang Province. His parents bought it from a small shop in Fuyang for 8.5 yuan, a relatively low price for baby milk powder.

A month ago, Li's family noticed that there was something wrong with the baby. He weighed 4.5 kilograms when he was born; now, he is 250 grams lighter and has bluish lips, a disproportionately large head, and short, bony limbs.

"At the beginning of March, we brought him to Fuyang People's Hospital. After an examination, we found out that the total protein in his blood is only half that of normal babies," his mother, Liu Haiying was quoted by CCTV as saying on Monday.

"This is caused by serious nutritional deficiency," said Guo Yuhuai, director of the paediatrician section of the hospital, to Xinhua.

Fuyang People's Hospital alone has received more than 60 such babies since 2003. Most of them are younger than six months old and eight of them have died from nutritional deficiency. However, these are only the ones who have been found. Guo says there may be many more.

"These babies died in the hospital and we have some records showing that there are some parents who gave up the treatment since they did not have enough money or because they saw little hope. What happened to these babies we cannot say."

As more and more "big head babies" came for treatment, doctors and parents started to suspect the milk powder which was the only food for these babies.

"After investigation, we found out the problem was the fake milk powder. The protein standard and other nutritional standards do not meet the national standards at all," said Guo.

No nutrition in the fake milk powder

According to Qi Yong, chief of the Food Administration Section of Fuyang Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control, they have received samples of 13 different brands of milk powder from families since last year and all of them are fake.

According to the national standard, the protein contained in baby milk powder should be more than 18%. However, the protein in the fake milk is only around 2% and the amount of calcium, phosphorous, zinc and iron also do not meet the national standard.

Qi said, "The fake milk basically does not contain any nutrition. The rice gruel people used to feed to babies contains more nutrition than this fake milk powder."

Guo, the director of the paediatrician section of Fuyang People's Hospital remarked that in some of the fake milk powder, the bacterium and iron contained exceeds the standard. This can damage the heart, liver, kidneys and other organs. Babies' immunity will be so low that complications can easily occur. If these babies are not found and treated immediately, they will die of organ failure.

Fake milk powder spreads in rural areas

Fuyang seems to have the worst

Fake Milk Powder Kills Babies

problem with the fake milk powder. Since a large number of local farmers hunt for work in cities, they have to leave their babies to be fed with milk powder.

The packs of the fake milk powder look impressive and come printed with various reassuring signs and slogans.

The retail price for a 400-gram bag of fake milk powder is about 10 yuan, much cheaper than famous brand milk powder. An anonymous distributor told Xinhua Weekly that they could buy the fake milk powder for 4-5 yuan and sell it for 10 yuan for retail and at least 8.5 yuan for wholesale. These profits are much higher than for standard milk powder.

Xinhua Weekly said on Saturday that the producers of the fake milk powder usually claim it's produced in Heilongjiang or Inner Mongolia, areas famous for their dairy products.

Can't prohibit the fake milk industry?

Last December, Fuyang Administration Bureau for Industry and Commerce carried out a comprehensive investigation into the milk powder with a focus on rural areas. They found the problem was severe: 33 of the 75 brands they chose at random were fake.

Last Friday, CCTV made some secret inquiries in remote mountain areas in Fuyang with a list of the fake milk powder prepared by the local Administration Bureau for Industry and Commerce and the Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control.

In Wumingzhen, a town 30 kilometres from Fuyang, the CCTV reporter went into a grocery store, asking if they had "Guai Guai Bao" milk powder produced



in Inner Mongolia. The shopkeeper quickly picked up a packet from the shelf. When the reporter questioned its quality, the shopkeeper said, "take it easy, this milk powder has been proved and the taste is good. I have many customers."

In another supermarket which is less than 200 metres from Wuming Administration Station for Industry and Commerce, the reporter found many brands which had been proclaimed fake by the Fuyang Administration Bureau for Industry and Commerce and the Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control.

When the reporter questioned if these products were safe to drink, the vendor gave the same response and indicated that the goods had been checked by the Administration Bureau for In-



Baby Qian Yu and his mother

Photo by Yang Fu

dustry and Commerce.

As to this result, Li Tie, vice director of Fuyang Administration Bureau for Industry and Commerce remarked that they often selectively examined the milk powder sold in the market but the vendors would hide the fake brands before they got there.

He said that since the beginning of this year, Fuyang Administration Bureau for Industry and Commerce has issued several cautionary notices to consumers and listed 33 brands of fake milk powder. However, after changing the packs or names, some of the fake milk powder was still on sale in rural markets.

The investigation showed that none of the fake milk powder found in Fuyang was produced locally. Two of them were from two Beijing based companies.

On Monday, 1,743 packs of fake milk powder which were produced by the two Beijing based companies, Beijing Bei Le Dairy Company and Beijing Wei Er Dairy Company, were seized by Beijing Administration Bureau for Industry and Commerce.

Authorities admit flawed market supervision

Song Jiawei, executive vice mayor of Fuyang government, admitted to CCTV on Saturday that supervision of the local markets by the government was flawed.

"We should recognize that the supervision mechanism is flawed. It is due to the irresponsibility of some governmental departments. We have already established a responsibility system so we will punish those who were responsible," said Song.

As to compensation for the fam-

ilies of the victims, Song suggested two steps: one is to help the families get compensation via the Consumers' Association and the Legal Aid Centre, and the other one is to subsidize the poor families with government funds.

On Tuesday, the government of Anhui required all relevant departments to carry out a thorough investigation of the milk powder market. They promised to punish the lawbreakers, prosecute incompetent staff and try their best to save the affected babies.

Li Qin, chief of the Special Supervision and Inspection Section of the State Supervision and Administration Bureau of Food and Drugs told CCTV about his worries before he set off for Fuyang on Monday. "We are afraid that fake milk powder may be on the market in other places. It is quite urgent to find the truth and reduce the harm as soon as possible".

Not the end

On Wednesday this week, five wholesalers suspected of selling fake milk powder were caught. Two of them confessed and revealed their purchasing channels. Ma Lanhua, Liu Biao and the three other suspects are milk powder wholesalers in HuaiBei market and other markets in Fuyang. In the investigation conducted by the Fuyang authorities, the wholesale market was the focus and they wanted to find the source of the fake milk powder. They have executed 42 cases relating to the sale of fake milk powder so far.

In addition, according to the report by CCTV on Wednesday, fake milk powder and other "big head babies" have been found in Heze, Shandong which is next to Fuyang.

The government investigation team which was sent to Fuyang also confirmed this week that the fake milk contained little protein, causing nutritional deficiency.

More Bodies Found in Murderer's Yard

By Zeng Pengyu / Dong Nan

Two more victims' bodies have been dug up four months after the case in Pingyu, Henan in which a serial killer was executed for murdering 17 boys. On April 14 and 15, two more bodies were found in the yard of the house where Huang Yong, the culprit, lived. The case startled the whole country in November 2003.

Beijing Today reported on the case in November. A number of local boys had disappeared since September 2001, and it turned out that Huang, a 29-year-old Pingyu male resident, had lured the young men back to his home by promising to show them a computer game. He then killed them and buried their bodies around his house and in the yard. All the victims were secondary school male students or men aged around 20. Huang was executed in December 2003.

Local police came under fire for failing to investigate the disappearances sooner and doubts have been renewed after the discovery of two more bodies. The police had initially suggested that Huang had killed more than 20 boys and now parents of the victims are full of doubt about the investigation and its conclusion that he had killed just 17.

More bodies found

In the evening of March 26, families of the victims gathered in Huang's yard since the Chinese Tomb-sweeping Day, a day of remembrance, was coming up on April 5. They wanted to hold a small memorial ceremony for their sons. But they soon discovered more human bones lying around.

"We felt it was strange and began to dig the earth. Soon we discovered many bones including skull fragments and shoulder blades. We also found two kitchen knives still stained with blood and with hairs on them," said Wang Liuchao, the father of murdered student Wang Liang, to Beijing Youth Daily.

The next day, the parents



Mothers of the murder victims with their sons' photos



Another body is dug up

reported it to the local police. But after two weeks, they got no response.

On April 14, a Beijing Youth Daily reporter went to Huang's house in Pingyu, together with Doctor Deng Yajun, a Beijing legal medical expert who had been contacted by the parents.

Wang Liuchao and Han Zhongyao, fathers of other victims, dug in the pit where they had found the bones and knives on March 26 but they found nothing more. After that, they dug in the ground next to Huang's kitchen, where Huang said he had buried several bodies. Police called this area "pit one". After ten minutes, more bones were dug up. Deng recognized

that they were human vertebrae.

After one hour, another body was found, missing the head and lower legs. Deng said that the victim had been dead for several months at least. The men stopped digging and called the police.

The next day, local police found another body.

How many victims?

Of course, the news was shocking to the parents of the murdered young men. However, since the murderer Huang Yong had been executed in December last year, it was difficult to get any further explanation.

Last November, after the case was concluded, the 17 young men's parents had a DNA screening and received their sons' bod-

ies based on the result. But the new evidence made them doubt the whole thing.

"Which bodies did we receive? Did they include two who were not from our 17 families? Why did the police claim Huang killed 17 people?" many parents complained to Beijing Youth Daily.

When a Beijing Youth Daily reporter went to Pingyu on November 16, 2003 to investigate the case, parents told him the victims numbered "23 people", which was what the local police had told them. The reporter went to Pingyu Police Bureau to check the number, but was turned away.

The next day, local police formally announced to the media that there were 17 victims. At that time, only five days had passed between the case coming to light and being declared closed. However, Beijing Youth Daily visited parents of 20 boys who had disappeared. The reporter asked local police to check but was refused again.

Where did the number of 17 come from? On April 14, the Beijing Youth Daily reporter saw a police record, which said that the police had found six pits with bodies and dug out 17 bodies.

Among the 17 bodies, two were spotted in "pit one". The record said that the body was found 95 centimeters below the ground. The body which was also found in "pit one" on April 14 was buried roughly a meter beneath the ground.

The other body the police found on April 15 was located in "pit three". The record showed that the police only dug down to 65 centimeters in November last year and found one body only.

"On that day, there were more and more dead bodies. Even the policemen felt it was horrible. At last, we did not dig for more," said a local villager who participated in the digging last November to Beijing Youth Daily.

The same police report also said that Huang had told Zhang, the last and only surviving victim, "I am a killer. I have killed

more than 20 men."

Whose bodies are they?

Are there any more young men who disappeared and might have been killed by Huang? On April 15, Beijing Youth Daily visited parents of two other missing boys: 16-year-old Wang Songlin and 19-year-old Feng Chong. Both of them disappeared in early 2002.

Wang Yun, Wang Songlin's aunt, said that Wang liked surfing on the Internet in net cafes. After he disappeared, his family reported it to the police immediately, but heard nothing after that. After Huang's case was investigated, Wang's aunt went to the police but was told that his name was not in the list of victims.

"We were shocked and fearful when we heard that two more bodies had been found," Wang Yun said. "Anyway, we still hope the police can find whether one of the two bodies is Wang Songlin's."

After the case was concluded last year, many parents protested that during the two previous years, local police did not pay much attention to the fact that so many young men had disappeared. To find their lost sons, many families paid everything they had.

After the case, the local government paid every family 50,000 yuan as "relief".

At the end of last November, Henan government dismissed the president of Pingyu Police Bureau and Pingyu Education Bureau, finding them responsible for the delay in investigating the case. The heads of Pingyu No.1 High School and No. 2 High School were also fired for not paying enough attention to the disappearance of so many students in such a short time.

The two newly discovered bodies have aroused local anger again. "Since all the victims were young men, popular indignation was extremely great at that time. And the media got involved. I think the government wished to appease people by ending the case as soon as possible," a parent of one of the victims told Beijing Youth Daily.

Huang was sentenced to death 27 days after he was arrested, and was executed 17 days after the sentence.

Rise of the Peacock Princess

By Sheng Mingming

Dynamic Yunnan, choreographed and directed by Yang Liping, was quite a hit when staged at Baoli Theater in Beijing from April 10 to 16. This large-scale dance drama expresses the hard labor, love and beliefs of the Yunnan people.

The show features dancers from about 20 ethnic groups from southwest China such as the Yi, Dai, Bai, Jingpo, Va, Hani and Jino. "We integrate the essence of the simple and unadorned dances of the mountains and villages and demonstrate their most original elements," explains Yang.

Yang Liping, herself born in Dali and a member of the Bai ethnic minority, has become one of China's most celebrated dancers, widely known as "Peacock Princess", after an award-winning performance in which she imitated the movements of the bird.



Yang Liping: my dances derive from my ethnic roots

The following section is based on various interviews with Yang Liping in the local media.

Q: You come from the deep mountains of Xishuangbanna, a most exotic region of Yunnan Province. What was your childhood like?

Yang: I'm from the Bai ethnic minority in Dali, Yunnan. After my parents' divorce, I grew up with my mother, two sisters and brother. As the eldest child in the family, I did farm work, grazed sheep and cattle and looked after my three younger sisters and brother. But I never thought life was too hard. I often ran and danced barefoot in the mountains, just like other kids my age.



Yang Liping in Yunnan

Q: How did your childhood influence your dancing career?

Yang: I received little formal education and never officially enrolled in a dance school. But I come from the Bai ethnic group, and we're all born able to sing and dance. We dance at harvest time, we dance to celebrate weddings, and we dance at funerals. Dancing is part of our everyday life. It is entirely natural and cannot be learned.

Q: You didn't receive formal dance training. That makes it hard to achieve success, doesn't it?

Yang: You are quite wrong on this point. People often narrow the definition of dance. Dance is everywhere. Movement of the body can come from farm work, such as transplanting rice seedlings, or turning a millstone; it could also follow anything in nature: clouds, a tree, a swimming fish. By observing and studying how butterflies flap their wings or watching the fire, I can imitate the movements with my body. From imagination to body movements, it's such an easy and natural thing for me.



Q: What made you develop your own training methods, different from the training you were receiving?

Yang: After I was accepted into the Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble in Beijing, at the beginning I followed the routine training of ballet and other folk dances, but later I found it unsuitable for me. That stereotyped academic training got me all tied-up, making it hard to dance in my own way, so I invented my own training techniques. The ballet dancers could not even stand up with out this academic training, but all my dances are derived from my ethnic roots, from nature. We dance to express our life, not to show performing skills. Anyway, it was not a good thing in the 1980s when individuality was deemed unusual and unacceptable.

Q: You became famous overnight in a national dance contest in the mid-1980s for your "Soul of the Peacock". You must have a lot to say about the peacock.

Yang: In the ethnic minority areas of Yunnan, the peacock is a totem. Our imitation comes out of respect and love towards peacocks and our inspiration to dance is inspired by their movements.

Q: What do you think is the essence of dancing?

Yang: Dancing is not my profession, but a lifestyle, as it is for other ethnic people. The Bai ethnic people call people like me 'bimo', a witch who has a gift of dancing. When I was very young, my grandmother told me that singing and dancing is one way we live and one way we express ourselves. The bimo talks with the gods and communicates between earth and heaven through dancing.

I don't like the prevailing contemporary "avant-garde folk dance", people wearing tight to perform Tibetan dance or high-heeled shoes to perform folk dances. I don't know much about the enigmatic theories at the academies, but my criteria for dance is very simple: No artificial affectations and no impurities.

Q: These farmers you selected for Dynamic Yunnan have become a hot topic.

Yang: Over 60 villagers from remote areas in Yunnan were invited to perform on the stage. Some were found when they were grazing cattle, and some were doing farm labor. It is these people that can portray the most traditional ethnic flavor. It is hard to say who was teaching and who was learning during our rehearsals. They joined for various simple

reasons. Some of them came for the chance to see the world outside their villages and some just joined for fun. One girl came to earn money to help buy cattle. Nobody considers it a mission to protect and inherit the culture. Neither do I. Dancing is just in our blood.

Q: Some reports say that you consider promoting dying folk arts as your responsibility.

Yang: "Responsibility" is a word added by other people, but I do feel it would be a great pity if I hadn't done it. I don't know if I can stop the fading away of this precious art form, but at least I can demonstrate its essence and show people that such an excellent art form once existed. The trend will not be turned by a single person's efforts.

Q: But you do have a strong sense of the value of your culture?

Yang: I lived in Yunnan for more than 30 years before I came to Beijing. I'm proud of being born in this "home of dance and song". The

native dances are the source of my choreography. Every year, I return to Yunnan to collect and learn people's original folk dances to get inspiration. But I've found some folk dances disappear very fast like many other cultural heritages, and that makes me worried.

Q: Dynamic Yunnan has been staged 129 times since its debut in August last year, with great success. Were you confident of such success? And how did you market the show?

Yang: To be frank, I didn't really pay much attention to the potential success of the dance at the beginning. But I firmly believe that ethnic folk dance that has survived and developed for thousands of years must have its own unique charm and glamour. Dynamic Yunnan is an artistic product. Genuine art also has high commercial value. It can make good money.

Q: There were stories that you had to sell your home, do some TV ads and perform in other shows to finance Dynamic Yunnan.

Yang: In 2001, when I went back to Dali to shoot a dance album as a conclusion to my dance career, I accepted excitedly the invitation by the Yunnan Travelling Song and Dance Troupe to create a dance drama about the life of ethnic people. However, the preparations were time-consuming. They finally gave up and withdrew all of their investment, so I was left in a dilemma. With help from my friends, I sold my house in Dali to keep the team going. I didn't see it as a disaster. It was an investment. I invest to dance. That's what I love.

Q: When you retire from the stage one day, will you feel lost?

Yang: I come from the Bai Ethnic Minority, and dancing is in my blood. Even if I'm not still dancing on the stage someday, I will still dance anywhere I can in my daily life.

(Sources: *Chuncheng Evening News*, *News Week* and *CCTV*)



Scenes from *Dynamic Yunnan*
Photos by Chen Bai / Gu Bin



By Peng Juan

Niuheliang late neolithic age site

The excavation at the No. 16 Site in the southwest of the Niuheliang Site in Liaoning Province last year uncovered six tombs and 479 relics. A stone tomb measuring 3.9 × 3.1 × 4.7 meters is the largest neolithic tomb found at Niuheliang, the center of the Hongshan Culture (3770-2920 BC).

It contained a well-preserved skeleton along with a life-like jade human figurine, a jade phoenix and a jade dragon, providing important clues for the study of burial customs, religious and sacrificial rituals, and uses of jade during the Hongshan Culture period.

Bronze workshops at Zhouyuan

In April last year, ruins of bronze workshops of the Western Zhou Dynasty were unearthed in Zhouyuan, Shaanxi Province, spreading across Zhuangbai and Lijia villages.

The excavation uncovered 120 ash pits, eight house foundations, two wells, three ash ditches, 35 tombs and a horse-and-chariot pit. Thousands of pottery and bronze artifacts including *ding*, pots, bronze bells, and bronze buttons were recovered. The most valuable relics were a number of pottery moulds with intricate engravings.

Known as the "home of bronze ware," Zhouyuan has yielded large quantities of ancient bronze artifacts. But it is until the discovery of this site that the mystery of where bronze artifacts were made comes to light.

Terracotta warrior pits and earthenware kilns at Mount Weishan

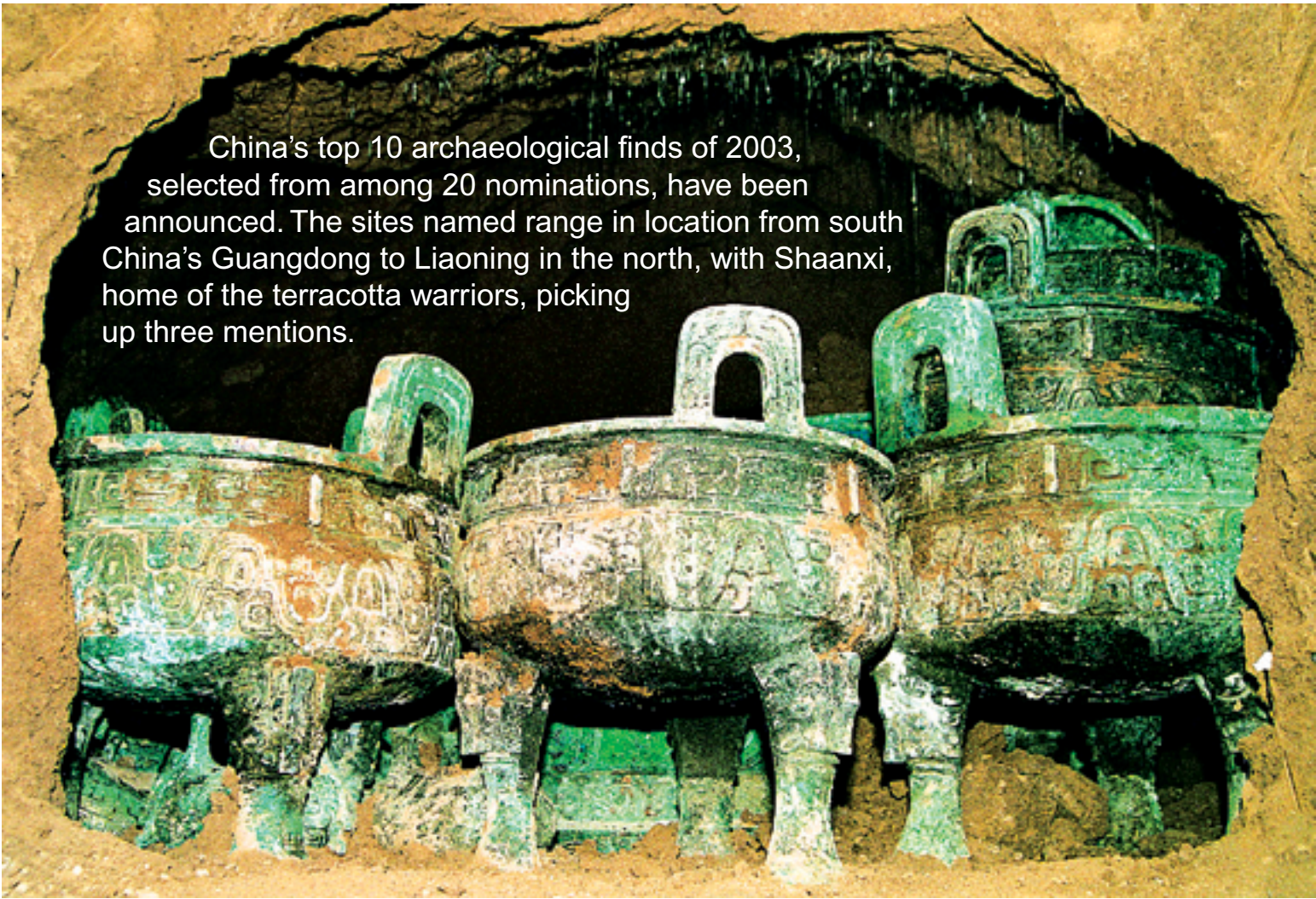
Another terracotta army was found last year at Mount Weishan, Shandong Province! The Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) tomb complex includes three terracotta warrior pits (one ruined), over 30 tombs and three kilns.

The No. 1 pit is 9.7 meters long and 1.9 meters wide, containing 173 life-sized painted terracotta soldiers, 56 horses, four chariots and more than 90 shields. Following the burial custom of the Han nobles, the soldiers and chariots are arranged in formation, with cavalry to the fore, chariots at the center, and infantry holding spears and shields, to the rear. In the No. 2 pit, 11 huge wooden trunks were found, as well as painted terracotta women, each with a unique facial expression.

Listed as China's third-largest terracotta army pit, the layout provides a vivid picture of the typical formation of Han cavalry, charioteers and foot soldiers when setting out for battle.

Royal kilns of the Ming and Qing dynasties in Jingdezhen

From 2002 to 2003, two excavations were carried out at the site of the Zhushan royal



Bronzeware ding from Meixin County, Shaanxi

China's top 10 archaeological finds of 2003, selected from among 20 nominations, have been announced. The sites named range in location from south China's Guangdong to Liaoning in the north, with Shaanxi, home of the terracotta warriors, picking up three mentions.

Top Ten Digs of 2003



Hongshan jade figurine



Pottery mould from Zhouyuan bronze workshop



Weishan terracotta figures



Jingdezhen royal porcelain jar

kilns of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties at Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Province. Porcelains of various kinds are the pride of the excavation, such as bottles, pots, jars, bowls, plates, cups, some of which are rare examples of their types. A group of six gourd-shaped kilns were also found.

The Zhushan royal kilns made porcelain only for the Ming and Qing imperial families. The new

finds provide valuable materials for further study of royal kilns, firing techniques and porcelain characteristics, and the manufacturing administrative system of those periods.

Dashigu Xia Dynasty city

The site of Dashigu, a city of the Xia Dynasty (2100-1600 BC), was excavated in the suburbs of Zhengzhou, capital of Henan Province between March 2002 and December 2003.

The rectangular site consists of the city wall and two 2-2.8-meter-deep parallel moats, as well

as foundation remains, tombs and ditches containing fragments of earthen drainpipes. The most unexpected find was traces of a circular moat dating back to the early Shang Dynasty (1600-1100 BC), lying between the city wall and the Xia moats.

Western Zhou Dynasty bronze cache at Yangjia

On January 19 last year, archaeologists unearthed a bronze cache of the Western Zhou Dynasty (1100-771 BC) Shan clan in Yangjia, a village in Meixian County, Shaanxi.

The cache contains 27 bronze pieces, each with engraved inscriptions. The 350-character inscription on a bronze plate is one of the longest ever found. The inscriptions on each of 12 bronze dings list the 12 Western Zhou kings, with information about each period. Two bronze vessels are inscribed with the year, month, Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches, and phases of the moon.

The finds provide valuable materials for the study of the Shan clan, the history and cul-

ture of the Western Zhou, and the relationships between the Zhou and the northwestern tribes.

Liao Dynasty tomb on Mount Tuerji

In March last year, a tomb of a Khitan aristocrat of the early Liao Dynasty (916-1125) was unearthed at Mount Tuerji in Inner Mongolia. Large quantities of bronze, silver, gold, lacquer and wood pieces and silk were found inside.

The tomb contained a coffin painted mainly in red and black, decorated with designs of celestial cranes, phoenixes, peonies and propitious clouds. Bells were hung along the edges. An intact skeleton was found inside, covered in eleven layers of silk clothing, with a necklace, headgear, bracelets, rings, earrings, bells around the ankles, and a walking stick.

City ruins of the Yuan Dynasty in Jining

The ruins of an ancient city of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) were unearthed last year in Jining, Inner Mongolia.

The square city is 940 meters long from south to north and 640 meters wide from west to east. A grid of roads divides the city into 31 blocks. Unearthed relics include over 200 well-preserved porcelains, almost 900 pieces of pottery, 10 pieces of gold and silver ware and 350 bronze wares.

The discovery provides significant materials for the study of city planning, the economy and culture of the Yuan Dynasty.

Jin Dynasty tomb beside Xiyan Pool

The discovery was made right next to the Xiyan (ink-slab washing) Pool of "Calligraphy Saint" Wang Xizhi's former residence last May.

The two brick tombs are the largest and best preserved Han (206 BC-220 AD) and Jin (265-420 AD) dynasty tombs discovered in Shandong. In the No. 1 tomb, more than 250 sets of bronze, porcelain, lacquer, iron, jade and gold artifacts were found, some of which have been listed as first- or second-class national relics. The most famous find is an exquisitely detailed bronze artifact depicting a man riding a lion.

North Sima gate of Zhaoqing Mausoleum

Excavations were carried out respectively in 2002 and 2003 at the North Sima Gate of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) Zhaoqing Mausoleum, on top of Mount Jiujun in Shaanxi Province.

The ruins are distributed evenly along an east-west axis. They include house foundations, remains of inscribed stone pillars, engraved tomb epitaphs, rectangular bricks and various shaped tiles. One of the most significant relics unearthed is the stone engraving "Fourteen Chieftains."

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By Iris Miao

In the enormous drive to build the capital into a "modern metropolis," particularly as related to the 2008 Olympics, a virtual who's who from the international architecture field has been commissioned to create high-profile buildings destined to stand as modern landmarks in Beijing.

French architect Paul Andreu drafted the egg-shaped National Theatre near Tian'anmen Square, Brit Lord Foster got the contract to design the new, \$1.9-billion terminal at Capital International Airport, the \$460-million Olympic Stadium job went to architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron of Switzerland and Dutchman Rem Koolhaas is the man behind the plans for the impressive, over-230-meter-tall twisting China Central Television skyscraper.

So, it is about time that American Frank Gehry, one of the few true household names in the world of architecture, finally made an local appearance, at least in some sense.

While the famed planner of the Spanish Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is not here in body, over 100 of his draft designs and 15 finely-rendered models of buildings designed by Gehry and five other American architects are currently on display in the show Driving the Skyline at the Millennium Art Museum.

The exhibit opened April 8 and runs through May 7.

Rarely are architectural shows half as exciting as buildings themselves, but care has been taken to give this event a sense of rhythm, immediacy and import. Curator Chen Yang said, "the point of the show is to raise the topic of architecture," in a wider cultural context.

Adaptation

Beijing is the latest stop in the show's Asian tour, which has already taken it to Taiwan, Singapore, Macao and Guangzhou since 2002. All the exhibitions have featured architects Gehry, Frederick Fisher and Eric Owen Moss as well as firms Koning Eizenberg and Morphosis, founded by Thom Mayne and Michael Rotondi, but each incarnation has been different, as the show was deliberately designed to be flexible and adaptable to the local demands of each venue.

The initial exhibition was organized by prominent American architecture critic Leon Whiteson and held in Taiwan and Singapore with a focus on how to transform simple and plain materials into refined designs in ordinary residences. When the exhibition arrived at the Guangdong Museum of Art in Guangzhou last September, it was renamed Deconstruction Space and the theme



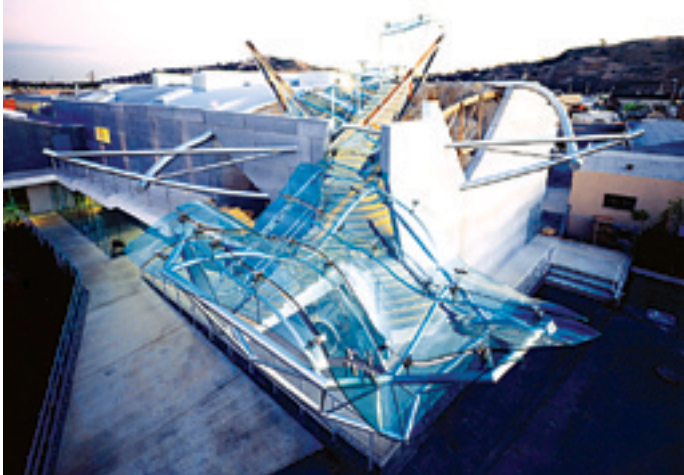
Frederick Fisher, Caplin House, Venice, California, Model, 1978

Building Beliefs

New show brings works of Frank Gehry and five California designers to capital



Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Bilbao, Spain, Photograph, 1997



Eric Owen Moss, Green Umbrella, Culver City, California, Photograph, 1990

was architecture's role in the post-modern deconstructionist ethic of the 1980s.

The concept of the local show has changed to the tune of the Olympics, addressing the tasks of planning a "green Games," and the role a single building can have in rejuvenating an entire city.

"Architecture has become such an important art form that it deserves the attention of museums and it is more and more becoming a topic not only for today's art scene but for our daily life. It is almost impossible to find scenes from daily life anymore that do not contain scaffolding," noted Wang Yudong, curator at the Millennium Art Museum.

"What we are striving for is a discussion of cityscapes. With the 2008 Olympic Games approaching, over 60 venues will be open to designers from all over the world," Wang continued, "and it would be pathetic if Beijing became merely a playground for international architects."

That comment was clearly directed straight at an article in the *Economist* magazine entitled "Cultural Revolution" that said, "China is the new playground of the world's civic dreamers." The report also covered numerous lo-

cal disputes and media flare-ups regarding the hiring of foreign architects to design landmark structures in Beijing.

Curator Chen said, "The focus is not really on the individual architects involved, but on evoking a larger topic of greater cultural significance. Today, philosophy underpins the way people think about architecture. Architecture has become the battle, the philosophy of our time."

Adding life

To breathe life into the static exhibits, the museum introduced a few multimedia features. A large monitor runs a 20-minute interview with Gehry on constant loop, while the whole show area is softly filled with challenging background music composed by Kenneth Fields, professor of media arts and computer music at the Chinese Central Conservatory of Music. It consists of sounds such as the ring of construction, the whoosh of a moving subway and voices from urban life around the world. Sound samples were collected in the field in Beijing, India, Cuba, Spain and other places, including the familiar local peddler cry of "Wan Bao, Wan Bao" for the *Beijing Evening News*. The orchestrated flurry of noise is intended to provoke the audience's imagination and help extend the visual journey into the audio realm.

Throughout the show's run, the film *Cities in the Movies* is being shown on weekends and every Saturday afternoon organized bus tours starting at the museum's southwest gate transport visitors around the city to look at interesting new structures.

This Saturday, another event related to the show, an open forum with experts in the fields of city planning and architecture, will tackle the topic "When a Building Rescues a City - Architectural Designs versus Cityscapes."

A true pioneer

Frank O. Gehry, certainly the best known of the six architects highlighted in Driving the Sky-

line, has been a direct influence on some of them, as their careers started in his studio, and an inspiration to all.

In 1989, at the age of 60, he was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate. At the time, Pulitzer Prize winner and famed architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable noted of Gehry: "He combines building elements on a site in a way that is not only intriguingly sculptural but also innovatively contextual, whether it is the small gem of a law school at Loyola University in Los Angeles, an ambitious American cultural center in Paris, or a commercial complex that suddenly sparks a humdrum block. What may look like arbitrary, and to some, off-putting, abstract geometry outside reveals itself inside as a series of unusual and inviting relationships achieved through a thoughtful analysis of in terms of a multidimensional concept of sensuously orchestrated space."

Asked whether Gehry has influenced Chinese architects, Zhou Rong, associate professor of Tsinghua University, replied, "Gehry designs could not be created here under present circumstances. China is simply not ready for him."

Yet Zhou also noted that a near duplicate of a Gehry design for a fish-shaped restaurant in Yokohama, Japan had been built near the Presidential Palace in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province. "It's a shame that most people are only concerned with the look of his designs, not the philosophies behind them," he said.

"Good architecture can be a small miracle rescuing us from the desertified plains of modern cities. Just look at the impact the Guggenheim Bilbao has had on that city and even on the worldwide craze for constructing new museums," said Zhou. "That could be Gehry's biggest contribution. If Jacques Herzog has been recruited to design a building in Beijing, it is only a matter of time before the city gets its first Gehry."



Eric Owen Moss, Beehive Feature, Model, 1994

Photo by Chen Bai

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Australian Film Festival in Beijing

By Yu Shanshan

If American movies are too commercial and those from Europe too philosophical, a dose of Australian film might be just the antidote. Beijing's first Australian film festival, featuring 10 award-winning recent films, will be held at Oriental Plaza Cinema from April 28 to May 9.

The ten films to be screened include *Dirty Deeds*, *Looking for Alibrandi*, *The Dish*, *Lantana*, *The Man Who Sued God*, *Siam Sunset* and *Two Hands*.

"In contrast to US movies that must cater to all people's tastes and French movies that are always led by some philosophic meanings, Australian films are more direct, interesting and simpler in telling a story," said Darlene Lee, an American artist and fan of Australian film living in Beijing.

Australian ambassador to China, Dr. Alan Thomas, said at a press conference Wednesday at Oriental Plaza that the Festival will showcase some of Australia's best acting talent, such as Bryan Brown and Sam Neill, rising stars in Hollywood such as Heath Ledger and Oscar nominee Naomi Watts.

"Australia has a vibrant and innovative film industry, which I believe will satisfy the Chinese audience and let them have a clearer picture of our country," said Thomas.



Two hands



Looking for Alibrandi



Ned Kelly



Bryan Brown



Siam Sunset



Amy



Siam Sunset



Two hands

Rock Review

Dou Wei

By Wang Yao

Dou Wei is almost as famous in China for being a founding member of Black Panther as he is for divorcing pop star Faye Wong. He has also had a relatively successful, if idiosyncratic, solo career that has ranged from rock to ambient to verging on classical.

His 1999 album, *Hallucination*, featuring *The Face* guitarist

Ou Ge, was heavily influenced by the ambient recordings of Brian Eno and Cocoteau Twins. It was followed by 2001's *Jing Hua Yuan*, featuring his E band.

In recent years, Dou Wei has worked with a number of bands, including E, Buyiding and Fm3. He consistently explores new directions, sometimes at a more leisurely pace than his fans might wish, and is one of those artists who always seems to be looking forward, without giving any further thought to where he has been.



What's on DVD

By Jiang Haoshu

Ghost in the shell: Stand alone complex

Ghost in the Shell, a story first created by Japanese animationist Mamoru Oshii in 1995, is widely held as the precursor of *The Matrix* both in theme and technique. As the third part of the TV series *Ghost in the Shell*, *Stand Alone Complex* was released in 2002 and still remains popular worldwide. This set contains nine DVDs with 26 episodes. Japanese with Chinese subtitles. (DVD 5)

Master and Commander—The Far Side of the World

Directed by Peter Weir and starring Russell Crowe, *Master and Commander* was nominated for several Academy Awards this year, losing out on almost every occasion to *Lord of the Rings*. Highlights of this deluxe double DVD9 version include a 68-minute documentary *The Hundred Days* and six *Deleted Scenes*, as well as a beautifully-printed old-style map marking the routes of the sea battle and a 28-page colored booklet of historical records and the making of the film. (DVD 9)

A Selection of Ingmar Bergman

A tribute to the great Swedish director, this collection includes five of his masterpieces: *Persona*, *Hour of the Wolf*, *Shame*, *The Passion of Anna*, *The Serpent's Egg*, plus a two-hour documentary *The Ingmar Bergman Collection*. Original language, Chinese, English, French and Spanish subtitles. (DVD 5)



WORLDWIDE

Beckham Confesses to Wife Victoria

David Beckham has confessed to wife Victoria Beckham that he had slept with Rebecca Loos and sent her a series of highly sexual text messages. Close pals say the former Spice Girl is so hurt by her husband's revelations, she has scrapped plans to be interviewed by British TV legend Michael Parkinson, and has jetted back to England alone to celebrate her 30th birthday today. (IMDB)



Deneuve's Diaries Get Mixed Reviews
French movie icon Catherine Deneuve's diaries, which span nearly 40 years of her acting career, are to be published for the first time next week amid mixed reviews from the French press. *In the Shadow of Myself* is a collection of the 60-year old's personal thoughts, which she kept in a diary while filming six of her movies including *The April Fools*, *Indochine* and *Dancer in the Dark*. Deneuve, who has been known to keep her private life secret, said in an interview with the weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* that she never expected her diary entries to be published while writing them. But a reviewer in the French daily *Le Figaro* on Thursday trashed the actress's literary attempt. The critic said the book "shatters the legend" of an actress otherwise thought to have intelligence, culture and finesse. It says the book chronicles the work, travel, thoughts and daily chores of the star, which, as it turns out, are not very exciting. *In the Shadow of Myself* was published by Stock on April 21. (AFP)



Ironman 28 Cartoonist Yokoyama Dies in Fire
Japanese manga cartoonist Mitsuteru Yokoyama, creator of the *Ironman 28* and *Little Witch Sally* characters, died in a fire at his home. Yokoyama, 69, was found unconscious in bed with severe burns early Thursday, police said. He died 16 hours later at a hospital near his home. The fire was suspected to have been caused by a cigarette he left at his bedside, police said. Yokoyama, a Kobe native, made his professional debut in 1955. He was inspired by the late Osamu Tezuka, Japan's best known and most creative "manga" cartoonist known for his *Astro Boy* series. (AFP)

Spin-off Likely to Take Friends Slot
NBC is very likely to give Matt LeBlanc's spin-off series, *Joey*, the same Thursday at 8 pm time slot that *Friends* is vacating at the end of this season, an NBC executive who spoke on condition of anonymity said. The spin-off features LeBlanc's character, Joey Tribbiani, moving to Hollywood to further his acting career. He moves in with a brainy 20-year-old nephew who's a rocket scientist. Drea de Matteo, who plays Adriana la Cerva on *The Sopranos*, has signed on to play Gina, Joey's high-strung sister. Kevin Bright, Shana Goldberg-Meehan and Scott Silveri — who were part of the creative team behind *Friends* — are working on *Joey* and the new series is expected to share its comic sensibility. (AP)

Streisand's 60th Album Goes Platinum

Barbra Streisand's 60th album, *The Mirror*, has been certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America, her publicist said. It is Streisand's 30th album to gain that distinction, according to a statement Friday from Guttman Associates. Platinum means more than 1 million copies have been sold. The album, released by Columbia, includes 12 recordings backed by full orchestra. (AP)



Barbra Streisand

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Java Gear

By Chen Si

It can be a challenge sometimes to find a truly satisfying cup of coffee in the capital. But just one shopping session at Coffee Style in Xizhimen is enough to negate the need to venture any further than the comfort of home.

The shop specializes in high-quality equipment for preparing top-notch coffee, from beans and grinders to pots and espresso makers.

Traditional mocha pots harness the power of steam to make fine espresso on average stovetops. Coffee Style offers

such pots in aluminum and stainless steel from European brands like VEV and Bialetti, priced from 300 yuan to 1,800 yuan.

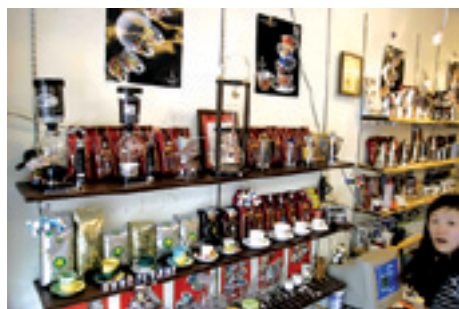
The top-of-the-line "Archimedes" pot whistles when the water inside boils and is made of shiny stainless steel with an embossed star design. The aluminum "Brikka" pot (650 yuan) is capable of generating excellent *crema*, the thin,

golden froth that floats on the surface of quality espresso.

Another option are siphon pots, also known as vacuum makers, glass contraptions that look straight from a mad scientist's lab. They use the magic of suction to produce delicious, fragrant coffee in a process that is very cool to watch. The vacuum makers on offer are from Japan and cost around 400 yuan.

True java heads should pick up a coffee grinder, allowing beans to be ground just before brewing for maximum flavor. Why buy such equipment and not indulge in fine beans, like the "Julius Meinl 1862" blend (150 yuan) from Austria? All kinds of other coffee-themed items, from cups to stirrers to coffee table books, are also on offer.

Where: No. 62 Xizhimen Neidajie, Xicheng **Open:** 10 am - 8:30 pm **Tel:** 6612 0097



Coffee grinders (above, at top and at right)



Exotic Temptation

By Lu Pinrou

Shoppers with sweet teeth should follow their noses to Bee-House, a compact candy shop near Wangfujing.

The store offers nearly 100 kinds of sweets, snacks and preserved fruits from all over the world, but with particular emphasis on distinctly Asian treats. Prices average around 15 per 100 grams.

The jars of temptation are divided into flavor categories, such as sour, sweet, salty and spicy, and staff are on hand to guide shoppers in making satisfying choices.

Candy options hail from many well-known Asian brands. There's Fujiya Peko, Indonesian Fox's Crystal in four flavors (mint, orange, blackcurrant and strawberry) and lots of harder to find products like durian and coconut candies and betel nut string.

Two popular treats these days are king-sized plums and plums soaked in strawberry juice, both shipped in from Taiwan and priced

at 13 yuan per 100 grams, and marshmallows with silky coconut imported from Belgium and tagged at only 5 yuan per 100 gram serving.

The savory snack selection is full of international surprises, such as shrimp chips with silky pork, flossy pork egg rolls and rice crackers with pork (all priced at 28 yuan per basic serving) from Thailand and wasabi beans, dried seafood and crackers hailing from Japan.

Where: No.134 Dongsu Nandajie, near Dengshi Xikou, Dongcheng **Open:** 9 am- 9 pm **Tel:** 6527 5872



By Sun Ling

In an era when anything you could want is on sale somewhere, little is more romantic or meaningful than giving that someone special something you made yourself. One place that allows even people with two right thumbs to do so is the Oulufeng

Cross Stitch store, a specialist in fun, do-it-yourself cross stitch products.

This small store is loaded with cross stitch patterns and paraphernalia. Many items are framed and hung on the wall, but a careful look through the shop shows that cross stitch can be applied to all kinds of things, from cardholders and purses to pillowcases, slippers and clothes. Prices of ready-to-stitch pieces vary according to size and complexity, ranging from 20 to 500 yuan, while finished works fetch considerably more.

One intriguing work is a portrait of a man, so detailed it looks like an oil painting. Yet it not nearly as hard to make as it looks. Actually, it represents the store's personalized portrait service - give them a picture, and they will send it to France to be converted into a precise pattern, leaving the stitching to the consumer. The process takes about one month and costs 260 yuan.

The store stocks everything a dedicated cross stitcher could need, from basic patterns to more than 500 kinds of thread, normal and shiny, in a tremendous rainbow of colors and all imported from France.

Best of all, under the staff's attentive help, a pure klutz can be cross stitching away in under 10 minutes. No longer are there any excuses to not give truly personalized gifts.

Where: No. 131 Longfusi Jie, Dongcheng **Open:** 8:30 am - 9 pm **Tel:** 6407 3698

DIY Treasures



Photos by Li Shuzhuan

Online Shopping

Puffing Pipeline

By Jiang Yongzhu

Pipe smokers unsure where to get supplies need look no further than their computers thanks to online store Cnsmokeshop.com, which sells all kinds of pipes, tobacco and other smoking necessities from such top brands as Dunhill, Falcon and Nording.

The pipes from century-old English maker Dunhill are particularly impressive, each one made through more than 100 processes. Shell series pipes (3,098 yuan) have U-shaped sandblasted bowls in black or red and two-knuckle bamboo extensions.

Falcon brand pipes can be easily broken down into different parts for easier storage and go to great lengths to provide comfortable cooling of smoke. Pipes in the company's standard series have carefully-sized central plugs and strong aluminum cooling tubes to provide just the right amount of chilled smoke through. These light, attractive items cost 468 yuan and come in a range of styles.

Other parts of the site offer all kinds of smoking necessities and accessories, from pipe bags to cleaning kits. Bags made of artificial or real fur come with room to store up to three pipes and fetch 58 yuan to 1,868 yuan. The online store is currently running a promotion on three-in-one cleaning kits, and the important tools are priced to be affordable to all smokers at 12 yuan to 32 yuan.



Dunhill Shell pipes, 3098 yuan each

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There are many kinds of mushrooms easily available in local markets, some of which would be considered quite exotic in the West. At the same time, some mushroom varieties familiar in Europe and the US are not available here, such as the giant portabello. Below is a short guide to navigating the fungal options in the city:

By Joel Kirkhart
Passionate appetites for mushrooms, particularly wildly varieties, can be literally dangerous, as eight people in a village in Anhui Province can attest. Xinhua reported Tuesday that the eight had to be hospitalized after picking and eating what turned out to be poisonous fungus. “An expert with the provincial health department said that people cannot judge whether a mushroom is poisonous with just the naked eye or previous

experience and warned local residents, particularly mushroom lovers, against picking and eating wild mushrooms,” the Xinhua report concluded. Fortunately, feasting on delicious fungi is a much safer prospect here in the capital and variety is by no means limited. China is, after all, the world’s biggest mushroom producer, and even small local markets are bound to stock a few different kinds of mushrooms. Chinese cooks’ careful attention to texture in foods is certainly a central

factor in the widespread use of mushrooms in native cuisine. Another is their wonderfully diverse flavors, lending them to all kinds of cooking treatments. When preparing to cook mushrooms at home, always start with the best quality fungus available for maximum flavor and nutrition. Make sure the shrooms are fresh, intact, well colored and have a wholesome, earthy smell. Because mushrooms tend to soak up water, and waterlogged mushrooms have

diminished flavor, washing them can be tricky. One good way to clean a shroom is simply to wipe it with a wet sponge or washcloth and then pat it dry. Dried mushrooms are very popular in China, and while easy to use, careful selection still pays off. To reconstitute dried fungi, rinse them quickly to remove any grit and then soak them in enough hot water to cover for at least 15 to 20 minutes. Save the soaking liquid to use in place of stock to add flavor to dishes and sauces.

Mushroom Magic



Xianggu or donggu – while not exactly the same, these are both known in English as the *shiitake* mushroom, a fixture in cuisines all over East Asia and the second-most cultivated mushroom in the world. They come in different grades and qualities, with the cracked top kind (called *huagu*) among the most highly prized. Shiitakes’ meaty texture and ability to absorb flavor while giving off their own exquisite essence means they can literally be cooked with nearly anything. One easy way to prepare dried shiitakes is to cook them with a bit of water and some soy sauce to make rich mushroom bullion. Then add a hit of cream to taste and you have a fantastic, easy pasta sauce.



Mu’er – Wood ear mushrooms are a type of jelly fungus, most commonly sold dried but also available fresh. These fungi are beloved in China for their crunchy texture more than their mild taste and traditional Chinese medicine holds they are “good for health,” particularly the respiratory and circulatory systems. Dried wood ears require soaking, after which they will quadruple or more in size. They cook very quickly and go well in soups, but should be added only at the last minute to protect their coveted texture and mellow taste.



Pinggu – known to the West as oyster mushrooms, these normally come out in



Fungal options in the city

Photos by Joel Kirkhart

fall but are cultivated and available in Beijing year-round. They are naturals for sautéing or stir-frying as their thin caps cook quickly. That also means they should be added towards the end of dishes. Fried in a bit of butter or oil, they emit a soothing, slightly sweet flavor that enriches sauces and is a good foil for mild foods like chicken or fish. They also go great in hotpot, absorbing flavor while retaining texture.



Jinzhengu – literally translated as “golden needle mushrooms” (the term used on most local menus), these mild mushrooms are probably best known outside of China by their Japanese name, *enoki*. When buying fresh enokis, make sure they are firm and smooth, not slimy or soft. Before cooking, cut off the lower centimeter and bottom growth of the mushrooms, as those sections tend to be fibrous and not too tasty. They are a fine addition to soups when tossed in at the last minute and go great in salads and cold dishes, such as the common restaurant offering *ban jinzhengu*, cold enokis with cucumber shreds and sesame oil. Or, try the following elegant, easy dish based on the unexpectedly delicious match of enoki mushrooms and shrimp.

Recipe: Shrimp Stir-fried with Jinzhengu
500 grams fresh shrimp, heads removed, peeled and deveined
500 grams *jinzhengu*, rinsed, bottoms removed
4 cloves garlic, sliced thin
1 tbsp vegetable oil

Heat oil in a wok or sautee pan until hot. Toss in garlic and cook until fragrant and just starting to darken. Add shrimp and cook 30 seconds until starting to turn pink, then add mushrooms and cook 90 seconds more until shrimp are done, mushrooms are soft and both have given off liquid. Serves two with another dish.

Caogu – straw mushrooms, which have a texture both firm and slimy, are popular in southern Chinese and Southeast Asian cooking, turning up in Thailand’s famous *tom yam gong* soup, for example. Around Beijing they are hard to find fresh and available only in canned form.



Exotics – There are countless more kinds of edible mushrooms grown in China, many from the remote mountains of Yunnan and other southwest provinces. Worth checking out are *jituigu*, known as shaggy mane mushrooms in the West, that have a thick, meaty texture, and smaller *xietougu* and *chaxingu*. A few stores in town even stock dried wild European mushrooms, such as chanterelles and morels, though prices can be steep.

Crabs for the Masses

By Sarah Bai
Spicy crabs, or *xiangla xie*, may have passed its golden days as Beijing’s hippest summer food, but that does not mean the city has lost its love of the Sichuan delicacy, as attested by the crowds inside the Xie Lao Song restaurant on the North Third Ring Road every night. The specialty of the house is the *xiangla xie*, but there are other options, such as spicy shrimp (*xiangla xia*), spicy ribs (*xiangla paigu*), and for the very brave, a bowlful of ox penis (*bawang niubian guo*). Most of these are served in the same way, fried in spices in a big pot set in the middle of the table. Once the main items are gone, the waitstaff come and pour broth into the pot to turn it into tasty, unsual hot pot. The spicy crabs at Xie Lao Song are not to be missed. A single order, costing 48 yuan, is enough to easily feed two. The crabs are strategically cut to ease access to the meat and flavored with a distinct mix of spices that includes hints of cumin and even cinnamon. The crabs are spicy, but not prohibitively so and can be ordered according to heat tolerance. When it is time to shift to hot pot, there is an extensive range of dunkable ingredients at surprisingly low prices. There are several types of mushrooms, from standard *xianggu* to exotic *niugan jun* (a bit slimy...), all priced under 10 yuan for a large serving, green vegetables, noodles, lotus root and meat, from basic rolls of frozen lamb



Xiangla xie, or spicy crabs

Photo by Aily

to thick-cut beef (*nen niurou*) that is very tender. Thanks to the spice paste remaining in the bowl and other tasty ingredients, the basic broth is full of flavor, negating the need for dipping sauce. Things tend to get hot, so it’s a good idea to order a couple of the restaurant’s cooling sides, such as crushed cucumber with garlic or a big salad of mixed greens (*liangban tian yuan shucai*). By putting the emphasis on food over flash, Xie Lao Song succeeds in drawing animated, diverse nightly crowds, like those that used to collect at Ghost Street restaurants years ago. A true local institution, this chain (there is another outlet in the Fangzhuang area) is a great place to feast on crabs and rub elbows with the “old hundred names.” **Where:** No. 34, Guangximen, Xibahe, south side of the North Third Ring Road, Chaoyang **Open:** 11 am – 2:30 pm, 5 – 10 pm **Tel:** 6432 8422 **Average cost:** 40 yuan per person

Bar Sans Bar

By Ian Provan
The one thing that just about every good, bad or indifferent bar has in common, is, well ... a bar. A visible bar, that is. It can be the main focus of the space, or it can be tucked away in one dimly lit corner. But generally, when you have lost the thread after one or two too many tequila slammers, if a careful survey of the room finds a row or two of shiny, backlit liquor bottles, and someone standing in front of them polishing glasses or doing something with a lemon, you can safely assume you are (still) in a bar. Grey Stone is not one of those sorts of bars. Stylishly laid out with comfy chairs and smart, low



Photo by Aily

tables, it is clearly targeting a subset of the hip, young, upwardly mobile crowd (the subset that tends not to indulge in one or two too many tequila slammers). There are four varieties of bubble teas on the menu, and coffee comes in pots for two or four, as well as individual drip filters, Vietnamese style. There is a small, but well-cho-

sen selection of wines, ranging from 290 to 400 yuan, while a glass of house red or white is 25 yuan. The range of beers and spirits is unexceptional, as are the prices. A large photograph of a Hasselblad camera above the entrance suggests that Grey Stone is, in fact, a bar-come-photo-gallery. The work currently adorning the walls, however, is a fairly standard set of “scenic Tibet” pics (not shot with a Hasselblad, by the look of them). While much care has obviously gone into the design and décor, what Grey Stone lacks is a sense of purpose, a focus. Perhaps a bar would help. **Where:** 2 Tuanjiehu Shangsi Lu, north side of Tuanjiehu Beikou intersection, Chaoyang **Open:** 2 pm – 2 am **Tel:** 6586 2757

Performance

Argentine Swing

The Argentine Dance King Tango Troupe will perform Tango Seduccion, which includes selections from songs and traditional dances of Argentina. They will be accompanied by the Argentine Tango Band, which consists of a grand piano, accordion, percussion, bass, cello, and violin.

Where: Century Theatre, Liangmaqiao Lu
When: April 29-30, 7:30 pm
Admission: 280-880 yuan
Tel: 6466 0032



Cats Coming

Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats*, the longest running Broadway musical ever, makes its Beijing debut on Tuesday. Based on *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, a collection of poems by T.S. Eliot, the musical revolves around the antics of such feline characters as Old Deuteronomy, Jennyanydols, Mr. Mistofelees, Rum Tum Tugger, and Grizabella, who sings the hit song *Memory* before ascending to feline heaven.

Where: Great Hall of The People, Tian'anmen Square **When:** April 27 - May 3, 2 pm and 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-1,680 yuan **Tel:** 8857 7030

Cross Talk Performance

In the traditional performance style called *xiangsheng*, or cross talk, two or more actors engage in witty, rapid-fire comic dialog taken from everyday life. This



show will feature actors Su Wen-mao, Li Lishan, Li Boxiang, Li Jindou and Tang Jiezhong.

Where: Nationality Cultural Palace Theatre, Xidan **When:** April 29-30, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-480 yuan **Tel:** 6602 2530

Northeastern Humor

Actors from Jilin Province will give a performance of *eren zhuan*, a traditional folk art form wildly popular in its native northeastern China that usually consists of two people singing, dancing and telling jokes in scenes that come straight from ordinary life.

Where: Beizhan Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng **When:** April 25-26, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 50-500 yuan **Tel:** 6834 4384



Kungfu Fightin'

The Songshan Shaolin Martial Arts Troupe will give a performance of super-human feats and amazing grace through Shaolin Gongfu, the famed school of Chinese martial arts developed at the Shaolin Monastery around 1,500 years ago.

Where: Beizhan Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng **When:** Tonight and Saturday, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 60-300 yuan **Tel:** 6834 4384

Tibetan Songs and Dances

Folk singers from the snowy plains of Tibet will put on a vocal concert including such pieces as *Tibet Altiplano*, *Shepherd*, *The Blessing from Jokul*, *The Himalayas* and more.

Where: Nationality Cultural Palace Theatre, Xidan **When:** April 28, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-480 yuan **Tel:** 6602 2530



The Courtyard South of North Street (Beijie Nanyuan'r)

This popular play, starring Pu Cunxin, Zhu Xu and Lu Zhong, returns to the stage. It tells the story of the changing relationships of two families who share a courtyard and are quarantined after a resident is suspected of being infected by SARS.

Where: Capital Theatre, 22 Wangfujing Street, Dongcheng **When:** April 28 - May 7, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-280 yuan **Tel:** 6524 9847

Blessing from Xinjiang

The Opera Ensemble of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region will present a variety show, the program of which will include dance, song and acting numbers such as *Why Flowers Are So*

Red, *The Night on the Grassland*, *Spring Wind Moves My Heart*, *In the Orchard*, and *Celebrations in the Festival*.

Where: Poly Theatre, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** April 27-28, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-500 yuan **Tel:** 6506 5345

Swan Lake

The world-renown Russian State Ballet Troupe performs the classic ballet to Tchaikovsky's masterful score.

Where: Beizhan Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng **When:** April 28-29, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 120-580 yuan **Tel:** 6834 4384



Jams

Metal Music

Saturday night Bing Yong, AK-47, Twist Machine (*Niuqu De Jiqi*), Battle-axe (*Zhanfu*) and Ping Pong Party rawk. Camel, Broken Star (*Shuixing*), and Aegean Sea perform on Sunday night.

Where: Get Lucky, No. 1 Dongfang Qicaida Shijie, Laitai Jie, Chaoyang **When:** 9 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 8448 3335

Glorious Pharmacy

Glorious Pharmacy (*Meihao Yaodian*) takes the stage Saturday night.

Where: Loup Chante, Chengfu Lu, Shiweiyang **When:** Saturday, 9 pm **Admission:** 20 yuan **Tel:** 6276 7355

Exhibitions

Yu Jiantao Solo Watercolor Exhibition

Self-taught artist Yu Jiantao from Dalian, Liaoning Province gets his first solo exhibition. Yu's works focus on real life objects, such as trees and ships.

Where: Wanfung Art Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** April 24-29, 10 am - 6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6523 3320



Activities

YPHH Spring Night

A fantastic free event and excuse to get out and enjoy drinks with friends on an open-air patio. The inside is also nicely decorated and a great snack menu will be offered. Prices of snacks and beer, mixed drinks, martinis and abinthe will be specially slashed.

Where: Alfa, Xinfuyicun, in the hutong opposite the North gate of Worker's Stadium **When:** April 29, 7:30 pm **Tel:** 6413 0086

Sand Swallow Kite Making

Learn to make traditional sand swallow kites with Zhang Zeduan, a National Folk Kite Master. Sand swallow kites are sturdy enough to hold up to Beijing's windy spring and easy to fly. Complete instruction will be provided on crafting and binding their complicated bamboo structures. English translation provided.

Where: Chinese Culture Club, No. 29 Anjialou, Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** Saturday, 3-5 pm **Admission:** 80 yuan **Tel:** 8462 2081

Music

Zhang Zisheng Guqin Solo Concert

The *guqin* is a 3,000-year-old Chinese musical instrument and Zhang Zisheng is one of its masters. He is the deputy director of the Tianjin Guqin Association, the country's first professional guqin teaching center, and one of the most promising players of his young generation. The Beijing concert is the last stop of the national tour for his new CD, which features Zhang's renditions of 10 classic tunes.

Where: Jinfan Concert Hall, 24 Wangfujing Street, south of Capital Theater, Dongcheng **When:** Sunday, 7 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan, 50 yuan, 100 yuan **Tel:** 5861 2287 (Tickets must be booked, will not be sold at the Jinfan Concert Hall)



China National Symphony Orchestra Concert

Eric Lederhandler conducts the China National Symphony Orchestra, with American soloist William Wolfram, through a program that cludes Gioacchino Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, *Symphony No. 1* by Beethoven and more.

Where: China National Library Concert Hall, Zhongguancun Nandajie, Haidian **When:** April 29, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 30-380 yuan **Tel:** 8854 5501

Sound of Music Symphony Orchestra

The Sound of Music Symphony Orchestra from Salzburg, Austria performs the cream of Mozart's works and excerpts from its namesake musical movie.

Where: Poly Theatre, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** April 26, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-680 yuan **Tel:** 6506 5345

Sandy Lam Solo Concert

Taiwanese singer Sandy Lam, a popular star since her emergence in 1982, returns to the capital with her trademark love songs.

Where: Capital Gymnasium, 54 Baishiqiao Lu **When:** April 30, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-1,000 yuan **Tel:** 6833 5552



TV and Radio Highlights

CCTV-9

Monday - Friday

Around China	6:30 am
Documentary	8:30 am
Nature and Science	
Chinese Civilization	11:30 am
Cultural Express	4:30 pm

Shanghai Today and Chinese Civilization	6 pm
Center Stage	7:30 pm
Sports Scene and Learning	
Chinese	11 pm
Dialogue	12:30 pm

Saturday

Travelogue	9:30 am
World Insight	11:30 am
Sunday	
China This Week	9:30 am
Business Guide	11:00 am

China Today	11:30 am
China Radio International 91.5 FM	

Monday - Friday

Easy FM Afternoon	2-7 pm
Fun in Beijing	5:05-5:30 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm

Saturday

Music Memories	8:05-11 am
Euro Hit 40	12:05-1 pm
Music Sans Frontiers	6:05-8 pm

Sunday

Joy FM	9:05-11 pm
Music Memories	8:05-11 am
Jazz Beat	6:05-8 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm

Movies

Cold Mountain

Directed by Anthony Minghella, starring Jude Law, Nicole Kidman and Renee Zellweger. In the waning days of the American Civil War, a wounded soldier embarks on a perilous journey back home to Cold Mountain, North Carolina to reunite with his sweetheart. Based on the novel by Charles Frazier. In English with Chinese subtitles.

Where: UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Kexueyuan Nanlu, Shuangyushu, Haidian **When:** opens April 30 **Tel:** 8211 2851



The Soul Keeper

Directed by Luigi Comencini, starring Iain Glen, Emilia Fox and Caroline Ducey. In 1905, a 19-year-old Russian girl suffering from severe hysteria is admitted into a psychiatric hospital in Zurich. A young doctor, Carl Gustav Jung, takes her under his care and for the first time experiments with the psychoanalytical method of his teacher, Sigmund Freud. In Italian with English subtitles.

Where: Italian Embassy, 2 Dongerjie, Sanlitun **When:** April 29, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187

The Crime of Father Amaro

Directed by Carlos Carraera, starring Gael Garcia Bernal. Recently ordained a priest, 24-year-old Father Amaro is sent to a small parish church in Mexico to assist the aging Father Benito. Upon his arrival, he meets Amelia, a beautiful 16-year-old girl whose religious

devotion becomes helplessly entangled in a growing attraction to the new priest. In Spanish with English subtitles

Where: Cultural Office of Mexican Embassy, No. 5 Wujie, Sanlitun **When:** April 28, 7:30 pm **Tel:** 6532 2244



Fire Birds

Directed by David Green, starring Nicolas Cage, Tommy Lee Jones, Sean Young and Bryan Kestner. In this forgotten *Top Gun* take-off, a squad of rookie Apache helicopter pilots in the US army take on the hired flying forces of an evil drug lord ... In English with Chinese subtitles.

Where: B2M, Dongheyuan Xiaogu, near the Lama Temple **When:** April 26, 9 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6426 1091

West Of The Tracks (Tie Xi Qu)

Directed by Wang Bing. This moving documentary shot in digital video chronicles the disappearance of one of the most important industrial regions in China. Because it is nine hours long, it will be divided into three sections playing from Friday to Sunday. In Chinese with English subtitles.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** April 23-25, 8 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 13901134745

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By Guo Yuandan



Zixiaogong (Purple Clouds Palace)

Pilgrimage to Wudang

By Wang Fang

Wudang Mountain, in the northwest of Hubei Province, is perhaps the best known of China's Taoist holy mountains. It was listed by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage Site in 1994.

The main tourist attractions, spread over an area of 300 square kilometers, compose a spectacular panorama of traditional Chinese landscape painting.

Known to locals as Taihe or Xuanyue, Wudang Mountain's beautiful scenery of tranquil valleys juxtaposed with precipitous peaks offers three main areas of interest to travellers.

Ancient Taoist temple complex

The oldest structures date back to 1300, during the Tang Dynasty, and there are examples of architecture from each subsequent dynasty; the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing.

There are altogether 72 temples, 39 bridges, 36 nunneries and 12 pavilions, a statistic that gave rise to the old saying, "a nunnery every five miles and a palace every mile." The oldest temple, Wulongci (Five Dragons Ancestral Temple) represents the commencement of the promotion of Taoism, hence Wudang is known as the cradle of Taoism. In 1413, Emperor Zhudi of the Ming Dynasty ordered 33 temples to be built within ten years, representing the peak of its development.

At twilight at Zixiaogong (Purple Clouds Palace), Taoist monks can be seen walking in the empty square in front of the palace. The master, Guo Gaoyi, a white whiskered and extremely healthy septuagenarian, suggests measures for preserving health, "Practising is to train ourselves and taking care is to protect ourselves. There are three kinds of treasure in the universe; the sun, the moon and the stars. Humans also have three kinds of treasure, the vigor, the breath and the spirit. It is important to know how to use them appropriately."

In Wudang Temple, the bell and the drum strike out the time. Every morning, the monks get up at around 5 and assemble in the palace to read Taoist canons, to the accompaniment of Taoist music, then do so again in the afternoon, also singing Taoist songs. At Zixiaogong, there are statues of gods and immortals on the altars, as well as sacred objects and musical instruments. This is where the largest Taoist rite for the saving of the souls of the dead is performed.

"You must be a good person before becoming a Taoist," is the often-heard mantra at Wudang. Taoists should be compassionate, loyal and faithful. Only by becoming a good person can one train oneself to become immortal, it is believed.

Wudang kung fu

Wudang kung fu enjoys great popularity, both in China and abroad. According to legend, Zhang Sanfeng, the originator of Wudang *quan* (taiji) was inspired by a fight he witnessed between a pied magpie and a snake. Wudang *quan* advocates the cultivation of morality and fostering of nature in conjunction with physical training.

The film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* attracted students of kung fu travel from all over the world to study with the masters at Wudang. Visitors to Wudang, if they are lucky, will see masters practicing on the roofs of the halls and on the mountain.

The Hall of Yuzhen is the cradle of Wudang kung fu. In 1417, Emperor Zhudi decreed Wudang to be the "Grand Mountain" and ordered the construction of the Hall of Yuzhen for Master Zhang Sanfeng.

On January 19, 2003, a fire broke out in the hall, reducing the three rooms that covered 200 square metres to ashes. A gold-plated statue of Zhang Sanfeng, which was usually housed in Yuzhengong, was moved to another building just before the fire, and so escaped destruction in the inferno.

Spectacular natural scenery

On top of Nanyan (South Rock) is a stone beam with a dragon carved on it protruding from above the cliff, which at-

tracts many travellers to burn incense on it as a sign of their devotion.

The Huanglongdong (Yellow Dragon Cave) is a cave surrounded by Taoist temples and shrines on the way to Jinding (Golden Peak). It is cool and damp, and said to be an ideal spot for meditation.

The final ascent to Jinding is a zigzag stone staircase of 212 steps carved into the mountain called Jiuliandeng (Nine Lotus Stairs). Standing on Jiuliandeng, the summit appears to be near at hand, and the mountains surrounding Jinding all seem to lean in towards it.

When finally arriving at the top, visitors go through a dark hall called Zhuanyundian (Changing the Fate Palace). Taoists rap on a wooden fish, asking, "have you turned round?" The reply, "Yes, I have," implies that their fate has changed. Upon stepping out of the dark hall, the contrasting sunshine is said to symbolize the experience of nirvana and a new life ahead.

Do's and don'ts:

Step over, not on the thresholds of Taoist temples.

Do not point at or turn your back to statues of the gods.

There is an old saying in China, "(Buddhist) monks don't tell their names and Taoists don't tell their age." Do not ask the monks how old they are.

If you go hiking on the mountain, find a local guide and do not stray too far from the main path.

Tip:

The best times to visit are spring and autumn.

Getting there:

Take a train to Wuhan and then transfer to the Wudang Mountain Tourists Train, or take the train from Beijing to Xiangfan and then transfer to Wudang.

Alternatively, fly to Laohekou Airport at Xiangfan. China United flight CUA307 departs Beijing at 8 am Wednesdays (580 yuan). From Laohekou, it is 90 kilometers by bus to Wudang.



Hall of Yuzhen

Photos by Imaginechina



The five-colored wooden screen inside the gate

Residence of the 'People's Artist'

By Zhang Ran

Just off bustling Wangfujing Pedestrian Street is the home of Lao She, one of China's most renowned writers of modern times. Now a museum dedicated to his memory, Lao She purchased the common Beijing courtyard residence in 1950, where he lived and wrote for 16 years.

In May 1984, the Beijing Municipal People's Government listed Lao She's home as a protected cultural relic, and in July 1997, his family donated the courtyard and its contents to the city. After renovation carried out by the Cultural Relics Bureau, it opened to the public as the Lao She Museum on February 1, 1999.

Lao She (1899-1966) is one of China's best known contemporary writers. Originally named Shu Qingchun, he was born into a poor Manchu family in Xiaoyangjia Hutong in Beijing's Xicheng District. He is the author of novels such as *Luotuo Xiangzi* (*Camel Xiangzi*), *Sishi Tongtang* (*Four Generations Under One Roof*) and the plays *Longxugou* (*Dragon Beard Ditch*) and *Chaguan* (*Tea House*). In 1950, Lao She was awarded the title "People's Artist" by the Beijing Municipal People's Government. During the Cultural Revolution, unable to bear the humiliation he was subjected to, he committed suicide by throwing himself into Beijing's Taiping Lake.

The main gate of the courtyard faces east. Within the gate, there is a small courtyard with a gray brick screen wall and two rooms on the south side. These now serve as the museum's administrative offices. Directly facing the inner gate is a five-colored wooden screen, behind which is a three-sided courtyard forming the main part of the residence. The building on the north side is divided into three sections. The central part is the living room. The east wing is the bedroom and painting studio of Lao She's wife, Hu Jieqing. Lao She used the west wing as his bedroom and study, describing it as the most peaceful place in the whole yard.

In the spring of 1954, Lao She planted two persimmon trees in the yard. In late autumn, these trees are laden with red persimmons, hence the name given by Hu Jieqing, "Red Persimmon Yard."

In Lao She's living room, visitors can see Lao She's furniture and belongings in their original order. On the hardwood desk inlaid with marble, sit his glasses, fountain pen, ink bottle, ash tray, reading lamp, radio and desk calendar. The western wall of the room is hung with Lao She's favorite calligraphy and paintings given to him by famous artists and friends.

The east wing rooms contain an exhibition of valuable books, photographs, manuscripts and personal possessions. It is divided into six parts, according to different periods of Lao She's life: Son of the plain Red Banner, School of Oriental and Africa Studies, Shandong Days, Hardship and Turmoil, Journey to America and Red Persimmon Yard.

Where: 19 Fengfu Hutong, Dengshikou Xijie, Dongcheng District

Open: 9 am - 4 am, closed Mondays

Admission: free



Exhibition of Lao She's books, photographs, manuscripts and personal possessions

Photos by Tian Xiaotong